

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*British Colonial Legacies, Citizenship Habitus, and a Culture of Migration: Mobile Malaysians in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur*

Sin Yee Koh

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography and Environment of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, January 2014

## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between British colonial legacies and a culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians (tertiary-educated Malaysians with transnational migration experience). Drawing from Bourdieu's "habitus", I propose the concept of "citizenship habitus" – a set of inherited dispositions about the meanings and significance of citizenship – to understand how and why mobile Malaysians carry out certain citizenship and migration practices. These practices include: firstly, interpreting and practising Malaysian citizenship as a de-politicised and primordial (ethno)national belonging to "Malaysia" that is conflated with national loyalty; and secondly, migration (especially for overseas education) as a way of life (i.e. a culture of migration) that may not be recognised as a means of circumventing pro-*Bumiputera* (lit. "sons of soil") structural constraints. Methodologically, I draw from my reflexive reading of archival documents and interview-conversations with 67 mobile Malaysians: 16 in London/UK, 27 in Singapore, six in other global locations, and 18 returnees.

I argue that mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices have been informed by three British colonial legacies: firstly, the materialising of race and Malay indigeneity; secondly, the institutionalisation of race-based school systems and education as an aspired means towards social mobility; and thirdly, race-based political representation and a federal state consisting of an arbitrary amalgamation of socio-economically and historically diverse territories. The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) further instilled state-led focus on "racial tensions", resulting in default authoritative strategies to govern, educate, and motivate the citizenry. These colonial legacies, inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state, contributed to the institutionalisation of Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and race-based affirmative action policies, with particular effects on education, migration and social mobility.

By adopting a postcolonial approach to migration phenomena, this thesis highlights the longevity of British colonial legacies with long-lasting effects on Malaysia's contemporary skilled migration, both in terms of migration geographies and citizenship practices.

### Keywords:

British colonial legacies; citizenship habitus; citizenship, nationality and loyalty; culture of migration; Malaysia; researcher positionality

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*To survey the future is to interrogate history, and as Malaysians debated their futures, history offered much that could illuminate their predicaments.*

Harper (2001, p. 382)

*A wise man once answered the question  
“Who or what are we?” Thus:  
We are the sum of all that happened before us  
of all that happened before our eyes  
of all that was done to us  
We are every person and thing the existence of which influenced us or that our  
existence has influenced  
We are all that happens after we no longer exist  
and all that would not have happened had we never existed*

*Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland (Samderelli, 2011)*

*We may not be “diasporas” in the sense of the Jewish diaspora. But we, too, feel a deep sense of emotional belonging and connection to our “Malaysia”. The land, the people, the place-time where we grew up.*

*We may have left as a matter-of-fact. We never did question it. It was just something we do, like everyone else does. But the truth is that we have never left – and probably will never ever leave. Because Malaysia is in our being. We have become and embodied Malaysia.*

*As we look back to history and project to the future, we see the remnants of the British colonials of hundreds of years ago, our cultural/ancestral forefathers thousands of years ago, our children and grandchildren of many generations to come.*

*I now know it is not a quest for a country. It is a quest for a geography-based humanity. A quest that combines a place-based connection shared by neighbours, and a cultural demeanour and way of life understood by a people with a shared history and experience.*

*It didn’t matter if I were to end up in Iceland, in Gambia, in the Dead Sea, on the moon. I continue to look in the mirror and see “Malaysia” in me.*

Entry in research diary, 10 June 2012

## Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiii
List of Abbreviations	xv

### **PART I – SETTING THE STAGE**

<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Overview	2
1.2 Rationale	2
1.2.1 Bumiputera-Differentiated Citizenship	3
1.2.2 Emigration and Disloyalty	4
1.2.3 Recent Migration Policy Changes	5
1.3 Questions: Linking the Historicity of Citizenship to Migration Practices	6
1.4 Conceptual Positioning	9
1.4.1 Postcolonial Approach to Migration	9
1.4.2 Citizenship Habitus	12
1.5 Explanation of Terms	13
1.6 Thesis Structure	14
 <b>Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework</b>	 <b>16</b>
2.1 Migration Theories	17
2.1.1 Explaining Migration	18
2.1.2 Explaining Skilled Migration	20
2.1.3 Studies on Malaysian Migration	23
2.1.4 Existing Gaps and Ways Forward	24
2.2 Postcolonialism and Colonial Legacies	27
2.2.1 Material and Immaterial Legacies	28
2.2.2 Putting the Responsibility on Colonial Legacies?	34
2.3 Citizenship, National Identity and Loyalty	36
2.3.1 Theorising Citizenship	36
2.3.2 Malaysia's Case	43
2.3.3 Existing Gaps and Ways Forward	45
2.4 Towards Citizenship Habitus	47
2.4.1 Habitus	47
2.4.2 Citizenship Habitus	49
2.5 Summary	50
 <b>Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodologies</b>	 <b>52</b>
3.1 My Migration Journey	52

3.1.1	<i>A Personal Narrative</i>	52
3.1.2	<i>A Malaysian “Diaspora”?</i>	55
3.2	Research Design	56
3.2.1	<i>Translating Motivations into Academic Terms</i>	56
3.2.2	<i>My Positionality Matters</i>	58
3.2.3	<i>Migration as Methodology</i>	60
3.3	Data Sources and Research Issues	61
3.3.1	<i>Archival Documents and Situated Histories</i>	62
3.3.2	<i>Interview Conversations: Recruitment and Ethical Considerations</i>	63
3.3.3	<i>Research Blog, Recruitment and Representativeness</i>	66
3.3.4	<i>Research Diary</i>	70
3.3.5	<i>Official Documents and Statistical Data</i>	70
3.4	Data Analysis and Meaning-Making	70
3.4.1	<i>Discourse Analysis</i>	71
3.4.2	<i>Computer-Aided Qualitative Analysis</i>	72
3.4.3	<i>“Fieldwork”</i>	76
3.4.4	<i>Navigating Personal Understanding and Positionality</i>	77
3.5	Summary	83

## **PART II – HISTORY MATTERS: THE MAKING OF MALAYSIA’S CITIZENSHIP HABITUS**

<b>Chapter 4 – British Colonial Legacies</b>	<b>86</b>
4.1 Before British Colonial Rule	88
4.1.1 <i>Migration and Settlement</i>	88
4.1.2 <i>Malay Sultanates, Kerajaan and Ruler-Subject Relations</i>	90
4.2 During British Colonial Rule	92
4.2.1 <i>Before World War II</i>	92
4.2.2 <i>After World War II</i>	94
4.3 Colonial Legacies	96
4.3.1 <i>Materialising Race</i>	97
4.3.2 <i>Education as Aspiration</i>	106
4.3.3 <i>Borders, Sovereignty and Citizenship</i>	115
4.4 Summary	126
<b>Chapter 5 – The Post-colonial State Carries On</b>	<b>129</b>
5.1 Focusing on “Race”	130
5.1.1 <i>May 1969 Riots</i>	130
5.1.2 <i>Citizenship as Exclusivity</i>	133
5.1.3 <i>Affirmative Action Policies</i>	138
5.2 Focusing on National Unity and Loyalty	153
5.2.1 <i>National Unity as Antidote to Racial Issues</i>	153
5.2.2 <i>Governing the Citizenry</i>	154
5.2.3 <i>Educating the Citizenry</i>	161
5.2.4 <i>Motivating the Citizenry</i>	168
5.3 Focusing on Political Power	171



5.3.1	<i>Barisan Nasional: Congealing the Alliance Formula</i>	171
5.3.2	<i>Manipulating the Electoral Process</i>	172
5.3.3	<i>Political Attitudes</i>	175
5.4	Summary	175

### **PART III – “RACE”, EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP MATTERS: MOBILE MALAYSIANS**

<b>Chapter 6 – Mobile Malaysians and A Culture of Migration</b>	<b>179</b>
6.1	Carrying Legacies into Migration 180
6.2	The Present State of Emigration 183
6.2.1	<i>Malaysians in Singapore</i> 184
6.2.2	<i>Malaysians in London/UK</i> 190
6.3	Migration Pathways 195
6.3.1	<i>Step Zero: “Internal” Migration</i> 196
6.3.2	<i>Step One: Migrating for Education</i> 202
6.3.3	<i>Step Two: Long-Term Residence</i> 209
6.4	Summary 212
<b>Chapter 7 – Tracing Migration Geographies</b>	<b>215</b>
7.1	Growing-up and Moving Around 225
7.1.1	<i>Migration is Normal</i> 225
7.1.2	<i>Migration Mentality</i> 229
7.1.3	<i>Summary</i> 230
7.2	Migrating for Education 231
7.2.1	<i>Education Migration Strategies</i> 231
7.2.2	<i>Education Experiences</i> 239
7.2.3	<i>Summary</i> 243
7.3	Staying On and Further Migration 244
7.3.1	<i>Original Plans</i> 244
7.3.2	<i>Option for Future Return</i> 248
7.3.3	<i>Summary</i> 249
7.4	Discussion 249
7.4.1	<i>A Geographical Culture of Migration</i> 249
7.4.2	<i>Flexible Citizenship?</i> 251
7.4.3	<i>A Perpetuation of Colonial Legacies?</i> 253
<b>Chapter 8 – Citizenship: Interpretations and Practices</b>	<b>255</b>
8.1	Citizenship as Inherited Belonging 256
8.1.1	<i>Primordial Belonging</i> 256
8.1.2	<i>Ethno-National Identity</i> 262
8.2	Practising Citizenship Strategies 267
8.2.1	<i>Citizenship as Security</i> 267
8.2.2	<i>Citizenship and Loyalty</i> 272
8.3	Discussion 279
8.3.1	<i>Unpacking Loyalty and the Primordial</i> 279

8.3.2	<i>Unpacking Security and Distrust</i>	281
8.3.3	<i>Contextualising Understandings of Citizenship</i>	282

#### **PART IV – CLOSING THE STAGE**

<b>Chapter 9 – Conclusion</b>	<b>286</b>
9.1 Contributions	287
9.1.1 <i>Postcolonial Approach to Migration</i>	287
9.1.2 <i>History and the Contemporary</i>	291
9.2 Policy Implications	292
9.2.1 <i>Return Migration and (Bumiputera-Differentiated) Citizenship</i>	292
9.2.2 <i>Looking Beyond “Race”: Education Reform</i>	293
9.3 Limitations	294
9.4 Suggestions for Future Research	296
9.5 Concluding Remarks	298
References	299
Appendices	
A1 Glossary and Explanations	332
A2 Evolution of Research Framing	334
A3 Archival Materials Consulted	336
A4 Respondents’ Profiles	342
A5 Recruitment Statement and Project Motivation	347
A6 Interview Guide	350
A7 Malaysia: Citizenship Laws	353
A8 UK Points Based System (PBS): Key Changes to Tiers 1, 2 and 4	362

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Relationships between Theoretical Spheres	13
Figure 1.2	Thesis Structure	15
Figure 2.1	Development of Various Types of Citizenship in Britain	42
Figure 3.1	Fieldwork Sites	60
Figure 3.2	British Pound to Malaysian Ringgit, January 2005-May 2013	63
Figure 3.3	Screen Shot of “About” Page	68
Figure 3.4	Illustration of Data Analysis Process	73
Figure 3.5	Example of Coding Visualisation Using Docear	75
Figure 3.6	My “Fieldwork” Trajectory	77
Figure 3.7	Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase I	79
Figure 3.8	Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase II	80
Figure 3.9	Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase III	81
Figure 3.10	Research Blog Post, 20 April 2013	82
Figure 4.1	States of Malaysia	86
Figure 4.2	Indian Immigrants to Malaya and the FMS, 1907-1913	98
Figure 4.3	Ethnic Composition of the Population of Malaya, 1911-1941	99
Figure 4.4	Photograph of Boys Representing Four Races	101
Figure 4.5	Education System in the Federated Malay States, 1930s	108
Figure 4.6	Ethnic Composition, Population of the Malayan Union, 1947 (%)	118
Figure 4.7	Percentage of Locally-born Chinese and Indians, 1921-2957	119
Figure 4.8	Ethnic Proportions in Territories to be Included in the Federation of Malaysia	125
Figure 5.1	Number of Malaysian English News Articles with References to “May 13” and “Racial Riots”, 1993-2013	132
Figure 5.2	Sources of Malaysian English News Articles with References to “May 13” and “Racial Riots”, 1993-2013	132
Figure 5.3	A Rough Sketch of the History of Racial Relations in Malaysia	133
Figure 5.4	Federation of Malaya Identity Card	135
Figure 5.5	Households by Income and Ethnic Group in West Malaysia, 1970	139
Figure 5.6	Ethnic Proportions in Tertiary Education Enrolments, Malaysian Public Universities vs Institutions Overseas, 1985	142
Figure 5.7	Ethnic Representation in the Senior Bureaucracy, 1957-1962	145
Figure 5.8	Ethnic Representation in Bureaucracy, by Educational Requirements, 1957-1962	146
Figure 5.9	Civil Service Employees by Ethnic Groups, 1956	149
Figure 5.10	The Malayan School System, 1958	164
Figure 5.11	Malaysia’s Education System	166
Figure 5.12	<i>1Malaysia</i> Banner in Kuala Lumpur, 2012	170
Figure 5.13	Letter to Chinese Voters	174
Figure 6.1	Malaysians (Country of Birth) Resident in Singapore (By Ethnicity)	184
Figure 6.2	Share of Tertiary-Educated by Country of Birth in Total Foreign-Born Resident Non-Student Population in Singapore Aged 15+, 2010	185
Figure 6.3	Malaysian-Born Residents in Singapore, by Age Group and Gender,	186

	2010	
Figure 6.4	Non-Citizen Spouses Married to Singapore Citizens (%), 2000-2010	186
Figure 6.5	Singapore Population by Proportions, 1970-2010	188
Figure 6.6	Singapore's PR and Citizenship Trends, 1980-1994	188
Figure 6.7	Singapore Population, June 2012	189
Figure 6.8	Singapore's PR and citizenship trends, 2000-2009	190
Figure 6.9	National Insurance Numbers Issued to Malaysians and Singaporeans, 2002-2010	191
Figure 6.10	British Citizenship Granted to Malaysian Nationals, 1983-2011	193
Figure 6.11	Types of British Citizenships Granted to Malaysian Nationals, 2006-2011	193
Figure 6.12	Migration Paths by Migrants Granted Settlement in the UK, 2009	194
Figure 6.13	Students from Malaysia to Selected Countries, 1998-2011	195
Figure 6.14	Net Inter-State Migration Flows (5,000 Persons or More), Peninsular Malaysia, 10 Years Preceding 1980 Census, 1975-1980, 1986-1991 and 1995-2000	200
Figure 6.15	Net Inter-State Migration Flows (5,000 Persons or More), Malaysia, 1999-2003 and 2006-2010	201
Figure 6.16	Outbound Mobile Students from Malaysia, 1998-2010	202
Figure 6.17	Top Twelve Countries with Outbound Mobile Students, 2000-2010	203
Figure 6.18	Student Outbound Mobility Ratio, Selected Countries, 2000-2009	203
Figure 6.19	Share of Malaysian Students in Selected Countries, Selected Years	207
Figure 6.20	Malaysian students in Taiwan's foreign student population, 1990-2011	207
Figure 6.21	Estimated Malaysian Diaspora and Brain Drain (25+), 2010	210
Figure 6.22	Reasons for Overseas Malaysians Residing in Current Locations, By Age Group	211
Figure 6.23	Durations of Stays of Tertiary-Educated Malaysian-Born Migrants in Selected OECD Countries, 2000	212
Figure 7.1	Respondents' Demographic and Social Stratification Profiles	217-220
Figure 7.2	Respondents' Migration Geographies	221-224

## List of Tables

Table 2.1	Dimensions and Realms of Citizenship	39
Table 3.1	Codes, Concepts and Categories Developed through Three Stages of Coding	74
Table 4.1	Population of Malaysia, 1957-2012	87
Table 4.2	Malaysian Citizens by Ethnic Group	87
Table 4.3	Malaysia's Former Political Entities under British Colonial Rule	93
Table 4.4	Increase in Population in the Federated Malay States, 1891-1901	98
Table 4.5	Employment in Government Service, January 1927 to mid-1929	111
Table 4.6	Government Free Places and Scholarships in Malayan Union, 1947	112
Table 4.7	Colonial Development and Welfare Scholarship by Colonies, 1946-1948	114
Table 4.8	Destinations of Overseas Students, 1947	114
Table 4.9	Key Features of Citizenship Laws, 1946-1963	116
Table 5.1	Population and Citizens in the Federation of Malaya, 1950	134
Table 5.2	Class Composition of Major Ethnic Groups in Malaysia, 1970 and 1990	140
Table 5.3	Ethnic Representation in the Civil Service, 30 September 1999	147
Table 5.4	Ethnic Representation in the Civil Service, June 2005	147
Table 5.5	Civil Service Employment and Total Labour Force, 2001-2009	148
Table 5.6	JPA Scholarships Awarded for Overseas Education, 2000-2008	151
Table 5.7	Categories of JPA Overseas Scholarships, 2009 onwards	152
Table 5.8	Internal Security Act (ISA) Arrests, 1960-2001	156
Table 5.9	Key Education Policies Relating to National Unity	165
Table 5.10	Government and Opposition Seats and Votes in <i>Dewan Rakyat</i> (%), 1959-2013	173
Table 6.1	Migrant Stocks (Malaysia as Country of Birth) in Selected Countries	183
Table 6.2	Persons Born in Malaysia by Year of First Arrival in Singapore	185
Table 6.3	Malaysians in London, 2004 and 2008	191
Table 6.4	Different Tiers of the Points Based System (PBS)	192
Table 6.5	Population by Migrant Status and State, Peninsula Malaysia, 1970 (%)	198
Table 6.6	Malaysian Students Overseas, 1970-1983	203
Table 6.7	Enrolment in Tertiary Education, 1980 and 1985	203
Table 6.8	Number of Malaysian Students, Selected Commonwealth Countries	206
Table 6.9	Number of Malaysians with Tertiary-Education in OECD Countries	209
Table 6.10	Sectors Engaged by Tertiary-Educated Malaysian Migrants in Selected OECD Countries, 2000	210
Table 6.11	Estimation of the Proportion of Malaysian Tertiary-Educated Migrants Staying On After Graduation	214
Table 8.1	Respondents' Participation in Electoral Voting	272
Table A3.1	Materials at The National Archive, London	338
Table A3.2	Materials at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Library, Singapore	340

Table A3.3	Materials at The National Archives of Singapore	341
Table A3.4	Materials at The National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur	341
Table A4.1	Respondents Residing in Singapore	342
Table A4.2	Respondents Residing in London/UK	344
Table A4.3	Respondents Residing in Other Global Locations	345
Table A4.4	Respondents Who Returned to Malaysia	346
Table A7.1	Citizenship Acquisition	353
Table A7.2	Loss, Deprivation and Renunciation of Citizenship	359

## List of Abbreviations

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of South East Asian Nations
<b>BCIC</b>	<i>Bumiputera</i> Commercial and Industrial Community
<b>BN</b>	<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (National Front)
<b>CUKC</b>	Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies
<b>DAP</b>	Democratic Action Party
<b>DOSM</b>	Department of Statistics Malaysia
<b>DOSS</b>	Department of Statistics Singapore
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>ETP</b>	Economic Transformation Programme
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>FELDA</b>	Federal Land Development Authority
<b>FMS</b>	Federated Malay States
<b>GTP</b>	Government Transformation Programme
<b>I/C</b>	Identity Card
<b>IDR</b>	Iskandar Development Region
<b>IKM</b>	<i>Institut Kemahiran MARA</i> (MARA institute of Skills)
<b>ILR</b>	Indefinite Leave to Remain
<b>ISA</b>	Internal Security Act
<b>ITM</b>	<i>Institut Teknologi MARA</i> (MARA Institute of Technology)
<b>JB</b>	Johor Bahru
<b>JPA</b>	<i>Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam</i> (Public Service Department)
<b>KB</b>	Kota Bharu
<b>KBSM</b>	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah</i> (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum)
<b>KBSR</b>	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah</i> (Integrated Primary School Curriculum)
<b>KKTM</b>	<i>Kolej Kemahiran Tinggi</i> (Higher Skills College)
<b>KL</b>	Kuala Lumpur
<b>KLIA</b>	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
<b>MARA</b>	<i>Majlis Amanah Rakyat</i> (Council of Trust for Indigenous People)
<b>MAS</b>	Malay Administrative Service
<b>MCA</b>	Malayan Chinese Association
<b>MCKK</b>	Malay College Kuala Kangsar
<b>MCP</b>	Malayan Communist Party
<b>MCS</b>	Malayan Civil Service
<b>MIC</b>	Malayan Indian Congress
<b>MICSS</b>	Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School
<b>MM2H</b>	Malaysia My Second Home
<b>MNLA</b>	Malayan National Liberation Army
<b>MOHE</b>	Ministry of Higher Education
<b>MOSTI</b>	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>MRSM</b>	<i>Maktab Rendah Sains MARA</i> (MARA Junior Science Colleges)
<b>MSC</b>	Multimedia Super Corridor

<b>MU</b>	Malayan Union
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Policy
<b>NEM</b>	New Economic Model
<b>NEP</b>	New Economic Policy
<b>NKEA</b>	National Key Economic Areas
<b>NOC</b>	National Operations Council
<b>NPTD</b>	National Population and Talent Division
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PAP</b>	People's Action Party
<b>PAS</b>	<i>Parti Islam Sa-Melayu</i> (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
<b>PBS</b>	Points Based System
<b>PMR</b>	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> (Lower Secondary Assessment)
<b>PPP</b>	People's Progressive Party
<b>PSC</b>	Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform
<b>PTD</b>	<i>Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik</i> (Diplomatic Service)
<b>REP</b>	Returning Expert Programme
<b>ROA</b>	Right of Abode
<b>RM</b>	Malaysian ringgit
<b>RP</b>	Residence Pass
<b>SAM</b>	South Australian Matriculation
<b>SJER</b>	South Johor Economic Region
<b>SPM</b>	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
<b>SPR</b>	<i>Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya</i> (Election Commission of Malaysia)
<b>SS</b>	Straits Settlements
<b>STPM</b>	<i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Higher School Certificate)
<b>TARC</b>	Tunku Abdul Rahman College
<b>UCSCAM</b>	United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia
<b>UCSTA</b>	United Chinese School Teachers' Association
<b>UEC</b>	Unified Examination Certificate
<b>UiTM</b>	<i>Universiti Teknologi MARA</i> (MARA Technological University)
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UKBA</b>	UK Border Agency
<b>UM</b>	University of Malaya
<b>UMNO</b>	United Malays National Organisation
<b>UMS</b>	Unfederated Malay States
<b>UPSR</b>	<i>Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Evaluation Test)
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>UUCA</b>	Universities and University Colleges Act



## **PART I – SETTING THE STAGE**

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This thesis adopts a postcolonial approach to explain and understand the citizenship and migration practices of mobile Malaysians (tertiary-educated Malaysians with transnational migration experience). Drawing from Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) "habitus", I propose the concept of "citizenship habitus" to examine what the Malaysian case can tell us about colonial legacies, migration geographies, and citizenship as interpreted and practised by migrants. In doing so, this thesis contributes to recently emerging calls for geographers to adopt postcolonialism as a theoretical lens to examine migration (Mains et al., 2013; McIlwaine, 2008).

Adopting a postcolonial approach is also my explicit and deliberate attempt to question and challenge the construction of knowledge which has been dominated by Anglo-Western experiences (see Syed Farid Alatas, 2006). As a migrant-researcher originating from a post-colonial,<sup>1</sup> multi-ethnic place of origin, I see this as my intellectual and political response and contribution to the discipline of Geography, which many have acknowledged has been based on Eurocentric and colonial foundations (see especially Blunt & McEwan, 2002; Bonnet, 1996; Driver, 1992; McEwan, 2009b; Sharp, 2009). This is also my contribution towards questioning the production of migration-related knowledge about Asia (Asis, Piper & Raghuram, 2010).

### 1.2 Rationale

The rationale for my research stems from two interrelated issues. The first motivation is empirical, concerning my desire to understand the origins and nature of Malaysia's skilled emigration in light of recent migration policy changes in Malaysia and two popular migration destination countries, Singapore and the United Kingdom (UK). The second motivation is theoretical, concerning my confusion as to how the Malaysian case – a post-colonial, multi-ethnic modern nation-state – can be explained using existing theoretical concepts with respect to migration and citizenship. The latter has been informed by my reading of existing literature, my encounters with other mobile Malaysians I have met as part of my personal migration

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I use "post-colonial" to indicate the temporal period after colonial rule, and "postcolonial" to indicate a theoretical approach.

journey, as well as my earlier work on Malaysian-Chinese skilled migrants in Singapore (Koh, 2010).

### 1.2.1 Bumiputera-Differentiated Citizenship

Malaysia is a post-colonial nation-state that gained independence in 1957 after more than 150 years of British colonial intervention. At the onset of its first existence as a modern nation-state (i.e. the Malayan Union in 1946), Malaysia was made up of a multi-ethnic *immigrant* population – largely a result of large-scale labour immigration encouraged by the British in the late-19th and early-20th century. Due to the British colonial administration's strategy of "divide-and-rule" to manage the multi-ethnic immigrant populations, there has been a history of racial hierarchy, racial ideology, and the making real of Malay indigeneity (see **Chapter 4**).

As a result, the introduction of a universal Malayan citizenship by the British colonial administration was fraught with opposition, especially from the ethnic Malay aristocracy. During the colonial to post-colonial transition (1940s–1960s), as well as key historical moments during the 1960–70s, Malaysia's citizenship has developed into one that is differentiated along *Bumiputera* (lit. "sons of soil") lines – what I call *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship.

*Bumiputera* is not an ethnic group *per se*,<sup>2</sup> but refers to a special "indigenous" status with special rights protected in the constitution.<sup>3</sup> Faruqi (2008, p.698) notes that the term *Bumiputera* "has no legal basis and is of political coinage" and that "there is no authoritative definition of it anywhere". Indeed, the term does not appear in the constitution. Instead, the constitution specifies "Malay"<sup>4</sup> and "natives" of the States of Sabah and Sarawak. Nevertheless, the Malaysian citizenry is divided into *Bumiputeras* and non-*Bumiputeras* (Balasubramaniam, 2007), especially since affirmative action policies have been put in place to assist *Bumiputeras* since 1970. These policies, most notably in the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP) (see **Chapter 5**), prioritise *Bumiputeras* in access to education, government scholarships, civil

<sup>2</sup> The Malays and other indigenous ethnic groups enjoy *Bumiputera* status, although in everyday life the term has been used predominantly in reference to ethnic Malays.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Article 153 of the constitution states that it is the responsibility of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (i.e. Head of State) to "safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak", and goes on to specify the "reservation ... of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service ... and of scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities ... and permits and licenses." Provisions are also made for Malay reservation land which is reserved for alienation to Malays or to "natives of the State in which it lies".

<sup>4</sup> A person who "habitually speaks the Malay language", "professes the Muslim religion", and "conforms to Malay customs".

service jobs, property ownership, subsidised housing and business licenses. These impact upon mobile Malaysians' migration, a point I will return to shortly.

In existing literature, many have criticised the continued salience of *Bumiputera*/non-*Bumiputera* divisions (see especially Mason & Omar, 2003). On the one hand, some scholars have highlighted the effects of such divisions including emigration of non-*Bumiputera* ethnic groups (Lam & Yeoh, 2004); unequal access to citizenship rights (Ong, 2009) implemented through affirmative action policies such as higher education placements and scholarships (Selvaratnam, 1988; Takei, Bock, & Saunders, 1973); long-term implications on the employment market as a result of race-based division of labour (Tai, 1984); national integration (Lim, 1985); and domestic politics and inter-ethnic group relationships (Holst, 2012). On the other hand, some questioned the *Bumiputera* category itself, including the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in removing race-based inequalities *within* the "Malay" ethnic group in access to higher education (Tzannatos, 1991); and exclusions of non-Malay indigenous groups from enjoying *Bumiputera* privileges (Nah, 2003).

While there has been a wealth of debates on the *Bumiputera* issue, little, however, has been done in examining what this meant for existing understandings of citizenship in relation to (international) migration. For example, *what can the racial politics of Bumiputera-differentiated citizenship tell us about the behaviours of overseas Malaysians vis-à-vis the Malaysian state, while in the diaspora? How does the Bumiputera-differentiated nature of Malaysian citizenship impact upon mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices, such as their considerations for return?*

### **1.2.2 Emigration and Disloyalty**

As a result of the practice of race-based affirmative action policies, non-*Bumiputeras* in general, and the Malaysian-Chinese in particular, have lamented their position as second-class citizens. Such sentiments are often accompanied by articulations of distrust of the Malaysian government. These are familiar narratives for me, having spent my childhood and teenage years in Malaysia. It has become common knowledge that some non-*Bumiputeras*, especially the Malaysian-Chinese, have sought migration, especially for education, as an exit strategy (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Nonini, 1997).

Indeed, growing up, I frequently heard stories about relatives, or someone else's relatives leaving for overseas studies or emigrating. During my 16-year stay in Singapore for education

and work, I came across many non-Bumiputera mobile Malaysians who had flocked to Singapore for education and subsequently stayed on for a career. I knew vaguely that there were many Malaysians in the diaspora, a perception I had also gained from recurring reports in the Malaysian media. In such reports, emigration would typically be equated to an act of disloyalty. Indeed, the mobile Malaysians I met often assumed that leaving Malaysia is frowned upon, and that returning was a sign of one's loyalty to Malaysia.

I was intrigued by this uncritical equating of emigration to disloyalty, which seems to be an accepted norm amongst Malaysians. Furthermore, despite the racialised nature of their migration, many mobile Malaysians appear to nurture a paradoxical strong sense of national loyalty to Malaysia. This confused me as these behaviours do not seem to fit existing literature on citizenship and diaspora. For example, this sense of loyalty articulated by mobile Malaysians does not seem to translate into civic and political acts such as contributions to homeland development, a norm in the literature on diasporas. In other words, loyalty is used to *describe* mobile Malaysians' sense of affiliation to Malaysia, yet this loyalty is rarely *translated* into "acts of citizenship" (Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

As part of my personal migration, I came across Malaysians who had stayed most of their lives overseas, but who still staunchly guarded their Malaysian citizenship without any desires to exchange that for another citizenship. This could be partially explained by the fact that Malaysia does not recognise dual citizenship, as well as mobile Malaysians' desire to retain access to benefits tied to their Malaysian citizenship. However, I have come across anecdotal accounts explaining such citizenship decisions as a combination of nostalgia and loyalty to Malaysia. Here, again, loyalty looms large. I wondered: *where does this narrative of loyalty come from? How and why is loyalty made significant for and by mobile Malaysians, in relation to their migration and citizenship practices? How does this matter to citizenship and migration theories?*

### **1.2.3 Recent Migration Policy Changes**

Although there was awareness of Malaysia's brain drain as early as the 1960s, it has only been since January 2011 that the Malaysian government has been actively pursuing reverse brain drain efforts. Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (TalentCorp), a government-linked company, was established in January 2011 to oversee Malaysia's talent project, including the revamp of the Returning Expert Programme (REP) to facilitate return migration. This is in line with the New Economic Model (NEM), an initiative introduced in 2010 by the Malaysian Prime Minister

Najib Razak, with the objective of Malaysia achieving high-income country status by the year 2020. In April 2011, The World Bank (2011) published a report on Malaysia's brain drain, estimating that there were 1 million overseas Malaysians in 2010 compared to 750,000 in 2000, of which a third were tertiary-educated skilled migrants (335,000 in 2010 compared to 217,000 in 2010). Although both TalentCorp and The World Bank report came about after I commenced my PhD studies in October 2010, I see these as signals that my research is timely and of policy significance.

In contrast to Malaysia's return migration efforts, popular destination countries hosting skilled Malaysian migrants such as Singapore and the UK have been implementing increasingly stringent citizenship and immigration policies (see **Chapter 6**). The UK's Points Based System (PBS) immigration policy, introduced in 2008, has seen frequent changes with the effect of restricting immigration and settlement. Similarly, previously skilled migration-friendly Singapore has adopted a more cautious stance since 2009. While these migration policies have used predominantly economic factors as carrots and sticks, Malaysia's return migration discourse has also played on the patriotic card. Overseas Malaysians are called upon to either return "to contribute towards the nation's development", or to "contribute back to Malaysia" while remaining in the diaspora (TalentCorp, 2012, pp. 141-143). Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister has also emphasised that "people who migrate are not unpatriotic and the government does not view them as such" (*Bernama*, 2011).

These recent migration policy changes present an excellent opportunity to examine how mobile Malaysians rationalise and respond to the economic and emotional push/pull factors of their emigration and immigration states. In particular, following what I had noticed about the recurrent articulations of emigration and (dis)loyalty, I was interested in examining the relationship between the Malaysian government's implicit discourse of migration and national loyalty, and how this has in turn been repeated by mobile Malaysians themselves. I wondered: *why is loyalty a recurrent theme in the Malaysian government's rhetoric and mobile Malaysians' narratives? Is this discourse of loyalty a unique one pertaining to the Malaysian case, and if so, why? How does this relate to theories of citizenship and migration?*

### **1.3 Questions: Linking the Historicity of Citizenship to Migration Practices**

My starting point for this thesis is: *what if mobile Malaysians' citizenship and practices could be explained by paying attention to the historicity of citizenship in colonial Malaya and post-*

*colonial Malaysia?* From my earlier overview of existing *Bumiputera*-related literature, it is evident that Malaysia's *Bumiputera*/non-*Bumiputera* differentiation is an issue of contention. However, not much has been done in drawing the link between how this differentiation came about and how it subsequently affects contemporary migration. Existing literature on Malaysia's brain drain tends to take *a priori* affirmative action policies as a push factor, particularly with respect to unequal access to higher education and economic activities. Thus, the discussions have unfortunately been framed within the limited discourse of brain drain or diaspora – the most recent example being The World Bank's (2011) *Malaysia economic monitor: Brain drain*.

While this may be true, I argue that this is only a partial picture. Furthermore, I argue that this obscures our understanding of migration phenomena in its entirety as it draws artificial boundaries between apparently "different" types of migration (e.g. student-migration and skilled migration) that could have been usefully conceptualised holistically in relation to an individual's migration trajectory. For example, although affirmative action policies limiting access to higher education and postgraduate social mobility may have been the fundamental cause for mobile Malaysians' emigration, how do their migration geographies pan out – before and after leaving Malaysia? Are brain drain and skilled migration theories the only way to explain their migration geographies? If, as common knowledge suggests, "racial policies enforced Malaysia's brain drain" (*The Malay Mail*, 2013), does the race factor play out similarly for all mobile Malaysians and throughout their migration geographies, or are there diversities?

More importantly, Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and the nature of mobile Malaysians' migration raise challenging and pertinent questions to inform existing migration and citizenship literature. First, Malaysian citizenship is differentiated along *Bumiputera* lines, and appears to be accepted as such by the Malaysian citizenry. *Why is that so? How does this challenge normative conceptions of universal and equal citizenship in the Western liberal sense?* Second, while mobile Malaysians would be described as skilled migrants in the migration studies and brain drain literature, they complicate the image of the privileged transnational migrant since theirs is arguably a racialised migration. However, despite this, there seems to be a paradoxical practice of equating the retention of Malaysian citizenship to loyalty. *How did this come about? How does this challenge existing understandings of citizenship and migrants' reactions to state-led diaspora strategies?* Finally, *what can the Malaysian case say to existing migration and citizenship literature?*

To address the issues raised above, my research questions are defined as follows:

- 1. What are mobile Malaysians' migration geographies, and how did these come about?**
  - a. How did mobile Malaysians end up where they are?
  - b. What can an examination of the historicity of citizenship in Malaysia tell us about the explanatory factors for their migration geographies, above and beyond race-based affirmative action policies?
- 2. What are mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices, and how and why are these carried out?**
  - a. What is the relationship between their interpretations of citizenship (in particular, citizenship as loyalty) and the citizenship strategies and migration practices they adopt?
  - b. How and why did such interpretations and practices come about?
  - c. What material consequences do these bring (e.g. to mobile Malaysians, to Malaysia the emigration state, and to Singapore and the UK the immigration states)?

Through these research questions, I aim to achieve the following:

1. To identify theoretical implications for migration and citizenship studies through an examination of the relationship between the historicity of citizenship and contemporary (skilled) migration in the Malaysian case; and
2. To identify policy implications for Malaysia specifically, and emigration states generally.

To operationalise the research, I adopt a reflexive reading of archival documents, in-depth qualitative interviews, and my research diary. Conducting archival research follows my starting point for this research: the historicity of citizenship and what this might mean for understanding contemporary migration. For the purpose of this thesis, I confine myself to a reading of archival documents pertaining to colonial Malaya (1820s–1950s) and post-colonial Malaysia (1950s–1960s).

My decision to employ qualitative interviews takes inspiration from works emphasising bottom-up understandings of the geographies, spatialities and imaginings of citizenship and national sentiments (Desforges, Jones & Wood, 2005; Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006; Mann & Fenton, 2009; Staeheli et al., 2012). In this thesis, I confine the interviews to mobile Malaysian



respondents resident in London, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur for reasons I will explain in **Chapter 3**.

My personal life journey as a mobile Malaysian circulating between London, Singapore and Malaysia further enriches this study by providing a reflexive insider/outsider perspective. This epistemological positioning draws inspiration from Haraway's (1998) situated knowledge and partial perspectives, as well as recent discussions of migrant-researchers researching migrants from similar backgrounds (Kim, 2012; Shinozaki, 2012).<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically, I position this research at the intersections of postcolonial geography, migration studies, and citizenship studies. Adopting a postcolonial approach is appropriate since this research seeks to understand contemporary migration phenomena in Malaysia through an examination of the historicity of citizenship and British colonial legacies in post-colonial Malaysia. Taking inspiration from Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) notion of habitus, I propose the concept of "citizenship habitus" as a postcolonial approach to examine and understand how and why mobile Malaysians adopt their citizenship and migration practices. In the next section, I discuss my conceptual positioning and the literature spheres I draw upon.

## **1.4 Conceptual Positioning**

### **1.4.1 Postcolonial Approach to Migration**

Postcolonial theory has informed our understanding of how colonialism impacts upon a colonised territory, leaving legacies such as racial stereotypes, education and political systems (see Ashcroft, et al. 2006; Loomba, 1998). In the discipline of Geography, it has been widely acknowledged that postcolonial geography offers opportunities to challenge the colonialism of knowledge and ideas (Blunt & McEwan, 2002; Kothari, 2006c; Sharp, 2009; Sidaway, 2000). However, as McIlwaine (2008) notes, there has been a lack of an explicit postcolonial perspective in migration studies. Although there have been attempts to address this gap, the research landscape remains limited in scope and foci. For example, while a special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2010, 36(8)) claims a postcolonial approach to the migration of expatriates and mobile professionals, the focus has been to theoretically analyse these "Euro-American privileged migrants" (Fechter & Walsh, 2010, p. 1198) vis-à-vis European

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<sup>5</sup> See also forthcoming articles in *Migration Studies*, in particular Carling et al. (forthcoming) and Nowicka and Cieslick (forthcoming).

colonists and settlers. There remains a gap in considering other kinds of counter migration flows.

Furthermore, owing to the attention on the perspectives of receiving countries – often former colonial states – discussions have tended to focus on issues of assimilation, cultural hybridity and the changes to cultural practices at home and abroad (Dwyer, 2000; Waite & Cook, 2011). Consequently, there is a lack of studies from the perspectives of sending countries – especially former colonies – particularly in terms of issues of citizenship understandings and migration practices.

On the other hand, existing studies on colonial legacies in Malaya and Malaysia have focused on the creation of racial categories (Hirschman, 1986, 1987, 2004); the production and legitimisation of racial knowledge (Fernandez, 1999; Manickam, 2009, 2012; Pannu, 2009); influences of political structures and development (Mohd Rizal Mohd Yaakop, 2010); impacts on education systems (Loh, 1975; Loo, 2007; O'Brien, 1980); and racial preference in education provision and entries into the civil service (Stevenson, 1975; Yeo, 1980). With regards to post-colonial consequences of such legacies, existing studies have tended to limit their analytical boundary within the nation-state (with the exception of Stockwell, 1998). These include racial/ethnic identities and politics (typically referred to as “communalism”) (Cham, 1977; Hua, 1983; Ratnam, 1965;) affirmative action policies (Lim, 1985); and the persistence of Eurocentric ideas (Ooi, 2003). In regards to migration, the closest – and often implicit and never explicitly drawn – links are between affirmative action policies and emigration/brain drain (Andressen, 1993; The World Bank, 2011). In sum, while there is a wealth of studies on colonial legacies in Malaysia, there remains a gap in examining how these legacies relate to migration.

Addressing the gaps highlighted above, my suggestion for a postcolonial approach to migration stems from an *emigration* state perspective. Empirically, my concern is to understand migration phenomena from a multi-ethnic, post-colonial Southeast Asian country. While the empirical has been my primary motivation, my end goal is located in the theoretical. According to Mains et al. (2013, p. 140), “[t]aking seriously the topic of postcolonial migrations means that we question the basis of our understanding of migration.” Building upon this, I argue that adopting a postcolonial approach to understanding migration contributes towards gaps in the literature in four ways.

First, a postcolonial approach traces how colonial legacies work their way into contemporary migration geographies and citizenship practices. This contributes to migration literature as it enables an examination of the interactions between the macro (e.g. the historicities of citizenship constitution) and the micro (e.g. individual migrant's interpretations of citizenship). While existing migration theories have contributed much to our understanding of why migrants migrate from various perspectives (e.g. political economy, individual motivation, the migrant household) (see Massey et al., 1993), there has been a persistent gap between macro-structural and micro-individual perspectives. As O'Reilly (2012, p. 7) notes, "it is still unusual for [migration scholars] to fully deal with the interaction of macro, micro and meso levels". Since "migration is rooted in structures and cognitive meanings" (Salaff et al., 2010: p. 3), migration should ideally be analysed in relation to interactions between structural forces and migrants' interpretations of what those structural forces mean to them. In the context of this thesis, this means understanding how post-colonial migrants' migration geographies and citizenship practices are circumscribed by, and interact with, colonial legacies.

Second, this provides a temporal lens linking the historical to the contemporary – without turning the research into a historical study. In other words, this approach provides a view to "the colonial present" (Gregory, 2004), albeit in terms of migration phenomena. This also addresses the limitation in existing literature on colonial legacies in Malaysia, which unfortunately has not gone beyond the confines of historical research (e.g. Harper, 2001; Milner, 1982; Stockwell, 1979).

Third, this enables a re-evaluation of key migration concepts such as citizenship, migration, and state-citizen relationship, in light of non-Anglo-Western experiences. In particular, this enables an interrogation of ethnicity and race, concepts that have been socialised as norms in post-colonial contexts through the forces of colonialism – and thus obscured in the analysis of migration. Since citizenship in the Malaysian case appears to be intimately tied to the notion of loyalty, adopting a postcolonial approach in this instance also addresses a gap in existing citizenship literature by highlighting how and why notions of Western liberal citizenship may not apply in certain contexts (with the exception of Longva, 1995).

Finally, a postcolonial approach enables bottom-up understanding of migration and citizenship, by paying attention to non-mainstream voices that has thus far not been brought to the fore in existing migration literature. This challenges existing literature on skilled and transnational migration, in particular the image of the flexible citizen (Ong, 1999), in two ways: firstly, by highlighting the "alternative realities within many Chinese transnationalisms" (Lin, 2012, p.

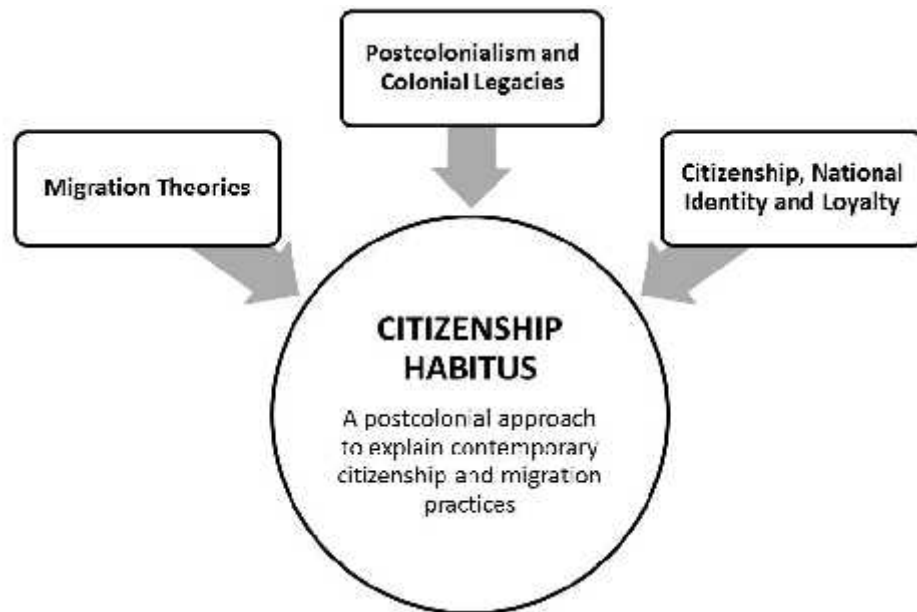
137); and secondly, by showing, in specific ways, how skilled migrants “do not live in a ‘frictionless world’” (Willis, Yeoh and Fakhri, 2002, p. 505) – with particular reference to the significance of colonial legacies and how these affect related migration issues.

#### 1.4.2 *Citizenship Habitus*

In this thesis, I propose the concept of citizenship habitus as a postcolonial theoretical framework to understand how and why mobile Malaysians carry out certain citizenship and migration practices. I do so by positioning their migration geographies theoretically at the intersections of colonial legacies and habitus – structure and interpretive meanings.

According to Bourdieu (2005, p. 43, original italics), habitus is “a system of *dispositions*, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action”. By extension, citizenship habitus is a set of inherited dispositions that structures ways of understanding, interpreting and practising one’s original citizenship. This set of dispositions subsequently affects how one understands, interprets and practise other citizenship(s) vis-à-vis one’s original citizenship – in this case, the Malaysian citizenship vis-à-vis British, Singaporean, and other citizenship(s). Here, an examination of colonial legacies theoretically and empirically is important as this enables the interrogation of firstly, how certain citizenship-related “truths” made real through colonialism contribute towards citizenship habitus in a multi-ethnic, post-colonial context; and secondly, the longevity of these “truths” that become internalised and carried as citizenship-related practices into a culture of migration.

To situate citizenship habitus theoretically in relation to migration in a postcolonial context, I further draw from three literature spheres (**Figure 1.1**): firstly, *migration theories*; secondly, *postcolonialism and colonial legacies*; and thirdly, *citizenship, national identity and loyalty*. The decision for drawing from these literature spheres is deliberate, and has been informed by the rationale for this thesis as I have explained earlier. Briefly, I look to migration theories as a starting point since this research stems from the fundamental question of why migrants migrate and the consequences of their migration. I then look to postcolonialism and colonial legacies since I am interested in adopting a postcolonial theoretical approach on a post-colonial empirical context. I also look to citizenship, national identity and loyalty as “loyalty” appears to be a recurrent theme in issues of citizenship and migration in the Malaysian context.

**Figure 1.1: Relationships between Theoretical Spheres**

Source: Author

Taken altogether, citizenship habitus offers an analytical lens to examine firstly, how legacies of colonialism initiate, facilitate and propagate migration; secondly, how certain colonial-institutionalised beliefs are carried into migration; and thirdly, how these understandings are subsequently translated into citizenship and migration practices by migrants from former colonies. I elaborate this theoretical framework in **Chapter 2**.

### **1.5 Explanation of Terms**

In this thesis, I chose to use “race” instead of “ethnicity” for three reasons. First, “race” captures the politicised nature of an internalised set of assumptions about the characteristics, demeanours, and ways of life across a group’s social, economic and political life. Second, this approach highlights the discursive use of “race” as a social stratification factor amongst the Malaysian citizenry. Finally, and most importantly, this emphasises the continued salience of racial ideology and hierarchies in post-colonial Malaysian society, which I argue has been inherited as a legacy from British colonialism.

For the purpose of this thesis, I confine my discussion of British colonial legacies in three areas: firstly, the materialising of race, racial hierarchies, and the myth of Malay indigeneity; secondly, race-based school systems and socially-constructed aspirations for education – especially British/Western education – as preferred means towards social mobility; and thirdly, race-

based political representation and a federal state consisting of an arbitrary amalgamation of socio-economically and historically diverse territories.

I use these colonial legacies, inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state, to explain why contemporary mobile Malaysians carry out certain citizenship and migration practices. By “citizenship and migration practices”, I mean: firstly, migration trajectories to specific destinations (especially Singapore and the UK);<sup>6</sup> and secondly, the subjective interpretations, meanings and practices of Malaysian citizenship vis-à-vis other citizenship and permanent resident statuses in migration destinations. An example of the latter would be these citizenship statuses are conceptualised, articulated and practised through the concepts of loyalty and/or security.

I also use the concept of “culture of migration” to describe mobile Malaysians’ migration practices. By “culture of migration”, I mean firstly, that migration/mobility is common and has been an accepted way of life for individual mobile Malaysians and their families. This takes the form of: first, multiple migratory movements throughout one’s lifecourse; second, the normalcy of migratory movements within the family and social network; and third, no clear distinction between internal and international migration from the perspectives of those who move. Secondly, migrating for education has become an internalised social mobility strategy that may not be consciously recognised as a way to negotiate structural constraints posed by the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies.

## 1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into four parts of nine chapters (**Figure 1.2**). **Part I** sets the stage for this thesis. Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** reviews relevant literature and develops my theoretical argument. **Chapter 3** details my research design and discusses methodological issues.

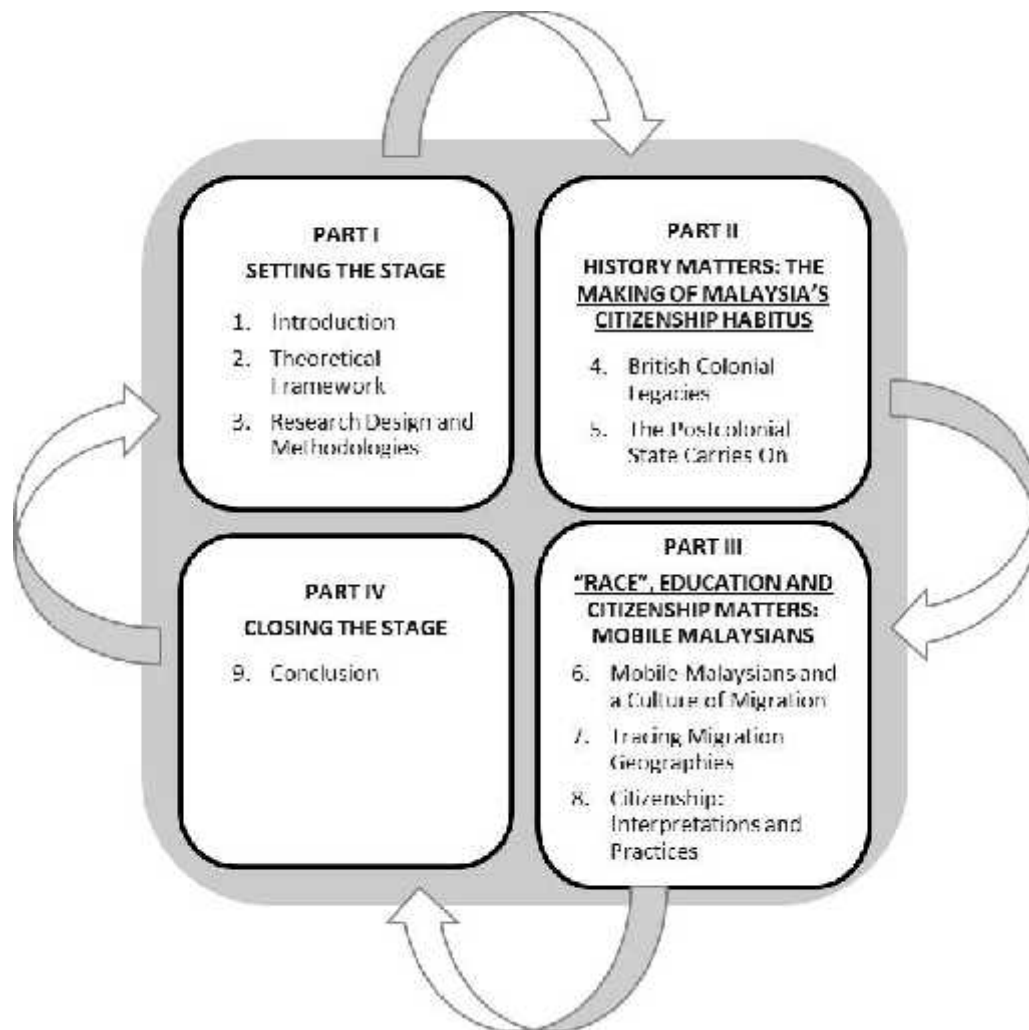
The next five chapters describe and analyse my research findings, organised into two parts. **Part II** (Chapters 4-5) focuses on *history*. The chapters examine *the making of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus* in two periods: first, identifying three “truths” solidified during British colonial rule; and second, tracing how these “truths” become institutionalised in post-colonial

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<sup>6</sup> These typically start off as a culture of migrating for overseas education, subsequently turning into a culture of further unplanned migrations.

Malaysia. **Part III** (Chapters 6-8) focuses on the importance of “*race*”, *education and citizenship* in mobile Malaysians’ migration geographies. The chapters examine *mobile Malaysians’ citizenship and migration practices* through three interconnected parts: first, introducing the current state of Malaysia’s emigration; second, tracing mobile Malaysians’ migration geographies across key life stages; and third, analysing mobile Malaysians’ citizenship interpretations and practices. **Chapter 9** concludes my thesis and discusses theoretical, methodological and policy implications.

**Figure 1.2: Thesis Structure**



Source: Author

## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In **Chapter 1**, I introduced the concept of citizenship habitus that offers a postcolonial approach to explain contemporary citizenship and migration practices. In **Section 1.4**, I briefly explained the conceptual positioning of this thesis: drawing primarily from Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) notion of habitus, and complemented by three literatures (migration theories; postcolonialism and colonial legacies; and citizenship, national identity and loyalty). This chapter expands on this theoretical discussion by reviewing each of the literatures in greater depth. I show how existing gaps in each of the literature spheres can be addressed *collectively* through the concept of citizenship habitus.

This chapter is organised in five sections. First, for *migration theories* (**Section 2.1**), I trace how existing theories have approached the explanation of migration generally, and skilled migration specifically. I then briefly review literature on migration of Malaysians, before ending this section with a summary of existing gaps, particularly in reference to a postcolonial approach to analyse migration. Second, for *postcolonialism and colonial legacies* (**Section 2.2**), I review three broad areas covered in existing literature: firstly, race/ethnic identity; secondly, education; thirdly, political system and democracy.

Third, for *citizenship, national identity and loyalty* (**Section 2.3**), I review theoretical literature on the relationships between citizenship, national identity, and loyalty/patriotism. Next, I move to empirical literature on Malaysia's case, which discusses issues of race/ethnicity, national identity and loyalty. I then draw the two strands together and discuss existing gaps. Finally, I discuss Bourdieu's notion of habitus and point out how the concept of citizenship habitus can be useful in integrating the literature spheres together to understand mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices (**Section 2.4**) before concluding in **Section 2.5**.

### 2.1 Migration Theories

In explaining the reasons for the occurrence and perpetuation of migration, existing migration theories tend to fall into two distinct categories. On the one hand, *structural/deterministic explanations* view migration as natural or inevitable outcomes of macro forces operating at global and national scales. On the other hand, *agency explanations* emphasise migration as



choices made by individual and/or social groups (family, household, community). Both types of explanations are not wrong in themselves, although there is an inherent dichotomy between them. Some migration scholars have drawn upon structuration theories in an attempt to bridge this dichotomy. However, as Bakewell (2010) argues, these attempts remain unsatisfactory as they fall short of providing consistent theoretical and methodological solutions.

In reality, migration is a “complicated, challenging, and diverse phenomenon involving changing statuses and multiple geographical trajectories” (Samers, 2010, p. 8). It is not just an individual migrant’s one-off movement across a geographical or political boundary. From the migrant’s perspective, migration is often subjected to shifting intentions and further unplanned migrations. Furthermore, one’s migration is simultaneously interlinked with one’s past and future generations, and a reflection of changing conditions in the origin and host locations (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 20). From the nation-states’ perspective, migration is interlinked with the management of population demography, citizenship and political economy.

This brings forth two persistent challenges to migration theories. Firstly, there is a continual gap between micro and macro scales of analysis as scholars attempt to strike a balance between understanding migrants’ perspectives and institutions’ perspectives. Secondly, and consequently, there is a structure-agency dichotomy as scholars attempt to understand the relationships between migrants’ agency and structural factors constraining migrants’ agency. Here, feminist geographers have advanced a more nuanced, gendered understanding of the structure-agency dichotomy by highlighting the role gender plays in migration (see Willis & Yeoh, 2003; Wright, 1995). This includes works examining intra-household dynamics and female agency (Chant, 1998; Lawson, 1998).

These two challenges have epistemological, theoretical and methodological consequences. Firstly, different disciplines place emphases on different aspects and dimensions of migration (see Brettell & Hollifield, 2008). For example, geography focuses on concepts of place, space, scale, and time; anthropology, cultural studies, and sociology focus on issues of socio-cultural identity and belonging; while economics, political science and law focus on the economics and politics of migration management and governance. Secondly, different levels of analysis require very different types of research methodologies. Macro-level analysis may use quantitative data sets to determine broad overviews of migration patterns; while micro-level analysis may use qualitative interviews to capture individual migration narratives.

Some recent migration studies have adopted multiple layers and lenses to better understand the complexities and diversities of migration. These include the socio-cultural; the biographical; and the relational. The first acknowledges how migrants' identities shape their interpretations of push-pull factors, seeing micro-level migration as part of a culture of migration (Kandel & Massey, 2002). The second adopts a life course approach rather than seeing migration as a discrete event (Findlay & Li, 1997; Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; Ní Laoire, 2000). The third moves beyond the economic versus non-economic dualism in understanding motivations for migration (Halfacree, 2004), such as employing a simultaneously top-down and bottom-up approach, or positioning migration in relation to history and contemporary temporalities (Favell, 2008, p. 260). While these may not necessarily be explicit attempts to resolve the structure-versus-agency and macro-versus-micro question, they contribute towards closing the gaps between the respective dichotomies.

### **2.1.1 Explaining Migration**

#### **Structural/Deterministic versus Agency Explanations**

Earlier migration theories have tended to see migration as *labour* migration, and thus have been influenced by economic theories. One of the earliest theories to explain migration is neoclassical economic theory. In this perspective, migration is seen as labour migration caused by wage differences between geographical locations. This echoes assumptions underlying Ravenstein's (1885, 1889) "Laws of Migration" – that migration is initiated and perpetuated by differentials between places. This view sees migration as a natural and inevitable economic response to structural forces. Furthermore, these structural forces "produce sociospatial inequalities and constrain the life chances of individuals as members of specific social classes in particular places" (Goss & Lindquist, 1995, p. 318). In other words, migrants have no agency: they are merely cogs and wheels responding to structural forces beyond their control.

Similarly, the dual labour market theory sees international migration as the natural outcome of a segmented labour market emerging in advanced industrial economies (see Piore, 1979). The demand for both highly-skilled and low skilled labour in these economies is fulfilled by labour migration flows. Although institutional factors (e.g. employer's role in recruiting migrant labour) and migrant characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, gender, skill levels) are taken into account, the dual labour market theory relies on a fundamentally structural approach in explaining why migration – interpreted as *labour* migration – occurs.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the historical-institutional approach offered a historically-grounded structural approach that conceptualised migration in relation to colonialism and regional inequalities. This approach has its roots in Marxist political economy and dependency theory (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 26), and explained migration in terms of the political and economic power relations between regions. The world systems theory, with its roots in Wallerstein's (1974) writings, advanced this by conceptualising how less-developed economic regions are incorporated into the world economy, which is predominantly controlled by more-developed economic regions. Here again, migration is explained by a macro-economic and structural approach. In addition, migration is seen from the perspective of the more-developed region (i.e. the immigration context) rather than from that of the less-developed region (i.e. emigration context).

On the other hand, the new economics of labour migration approach (Stark, 1990; Taylor, 1999) sees families, households and social groups as the unit of analysis instead of the individual migrant. Migration is seen as a family strategy, where household members are deployed in various migration trajectories to diversify income sources and to minimise risk. Here, migration is no longer seen purely as a response to structural demands. Instead, migration is the result of a household decision (i.e. agency). Another agent-specific perspective comes from the assumption of the migrant as *homo economicus* – a rational individual with perfect information seeking to maximise his/her predominantly economic utility. This assumption has been prevalent in most economics-based migration theories. However, migrants rarely possess perfect information nor do they have complete freedom in their migration decisions.

### **Networks and Cultures of Migration**

Network theory, institutional theory and cumulative causation explain the perpetuation of migration, while the cultures of migration approach can explain the initiation *and* perpetuation of migration. According to the network theory, migrants draw upon formal and informal social networks for information and resources in making their migration decisions, as well as to manage migration costs. Institutional theory suggests that as a particular migration flow develops, migration institutions emerge to provide services facilitating migration. Cumulative causation explains that with time, migration flow sustains itself as each migration act cumulatively contributes to make subsequent migration more likely.

Migration systems theory suggests that migration flows between emigration and immigration contexts result from pre-existing economic, cultural and political links. In a similar way, a culture of migration perspective sees migration flows as a socialised “rite of passage” undertaken by members of an emigration context. This has been adopted in explaining well-established international migration flows such as Mexican (Kandel & Massey, 2002) and Filipino emigration (Asis, 2006). More recently, this approach has also been adopted in rural-urban migration (Cohen, 2004) and other less-known contexts, such as Ali’s (2007) study of Hyderabad Muslim migrants.

Networks and cultures of migration theories are useful in explaining collective migration and socialised migration behaviours from a particular emigration context. However, they cannot take into account different levels of analysis simultaneously. In addition, they may not be transferable to contexts where there has been no critical mass of similar migration trajectories. With regard to the issue of structure versus agency, networks and cultures of migration theories can be seen as structuration approaches as they can take into account the interactions between structural forces and agency of members of a migration community.

### **2.1.2 Explaining Skilled Migration**

#### **States’ Perspective**

Within literature adopting the states’ perspective, skilled migration has been theorised through concepts such as “brain drain”, “brain gain” and “brain circulation”. “Brain drain” was first used in reference to the post-World War II exodus of British doctors to the United States and Canada (Crush & Hughes, 2009, p. 342). The term has since been used more generally to describe the loss of skilled professionals and related externalities accompanying their exit. In contrast, “brain gain” refers to the inflow of skilled professionals and the accompanying compounding effects in immigration states, while “brain circulation” refers to the transnational circulation of human capital, bringing benefits to both immigration and emigration states (Saxenian, 2005). Although different terms have been used, they are linked by the common theme: migration of skilled persons across national borders.

The issue of brain drain (typically from developing to developed countries) has seen a transition from the pessimistic stance to discussions of brain circulation (Saxenian, 2005) and “talent flow” (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005). While previous normative debates have been about developed immigration states’ responsibilities in tackling global inequalities (Kapur & McHale, 2005), emphases are now placed on the roles of emigration states in engaging their

diasporas and facilitating their contributions (Brinkerhoff, 2006; Chappell & Glennie, 2009; de Haas, 2006; Ionescu, 2006); and the roles of diasporas as development agents in initiating and participating in homeland-development projects (Faist, 2008; Hugo, 2011). For skilled migrants/diasporas, these take the form of diaspora networks (Kuznetsov & World Bank Institute, 2006), knowledge transfers and return migration (Iredale, Guo, & Rozario, 2003).

Recently, the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) and Migration Policy Institute (MPI) published a handbook on how emigration *and* immigration states can better engage diasporas in development (IOM & MPI, 2012). This signals the reinvigoration of migrants/diasporas as development agents, an assumption with which Raghuram (2009b) and Ho (2011a) have raised concerns. Nevertheless, the migration-development nexus (see Faist & Fauser, 2011) continues to be perpetuated by international development organisations such as The World Bank and the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). Thus, from the states' perspectives, skilled migrants/diasporas are valuable talents and resources to be capitalised for development purposes.

### **Migrants' Perspective**

Literature explaining skilled migration from migrants' perspective has tended to focus on economic factors. For example, Papademetriou, Somerville, and Tanaka (2008, p. 23) suggest "drivers" and "facilitators" considered by highly-skilled migrants as a total package in deciding their emigration destinations. "Drivers" are "first-order variables" of economic factors (opportunities, capital infrastructure and the presence of critical masses of other talented professionals); while "facilitators" are "second-order variables" or non-economic factors (fair and generous social model, lifestyle and environmental factors, and tolerant and safe society).

Looking more closely into push factors driving skilled migrants' emigration, Favell et al. (2006, pp. 8-9) suggest that they are "career-frustrated 'spiralists', who have gambled with dramatic spatial mobility in their education and careers abroad to improve social mobility opportunities that are otherwise blocked at home". Similarly, Chappell and Glennie (2010) suggest that skilled emigration decision factors include income remuneration, employment, professional development, personal and professional networks, and political and economic circumstances in the homeland; while return migration decision factors include general improvement of situations in the homeland, feeling of belonging to one's culture and society, and the intentionally temporary nature of one's skilled migration sojourn.

In all three examples, emphasis is placed primarily on economic factors, while socio-cultural factors are seen as complementary catalytic factors. In other words, while these analyses incorporate non-economic considerations such as social and environmental factors, they are still premised upon the assumption of a rational *homo economicus* performing cost-benefit calculations. Exceptions, however, are in feminist geographers' discussions of gender roles and relations in skilled migrants' migration decisions and experiences. Yeoh and Willis (2005), for example, highlight how Singaporean transnational female migrants in China negotiate their multiple social roles as "tied" or "lead" migrants. In other words, economic rationalisations may not be the only considerations for skilled migrants.

Taking another approach, Ho (2011b, p. 126) argues that Singaporean transnational migrants chose to emigrate and remain extraterritorial citizens "as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with Singaporean policies and societal rules". Furthermore, the "guilt" strategy (Ho, 2009, p. 799) of labelling emigrants as "quitters" rather than "stayers" employed by the Singaporean state to instil loyalty to the country has been received with aversion and resentment, especially when the Singaporean state is perceived to be privileging foreign talents over Singaporean citizens (see Ng, 2010; Yeoh & Huang, 2004). Ho's (2009, 2011b) work shows that perceived and reciprocal relationships between skilled migrants/diasporas and the emigration state can be an important factor in motivating emigration.

In regards to return, much work has focused on return migration of student-migrants or highly-skilled migrants in specific professional sectors (e.g. Iredale, et al., 2003). For student-migrants, studies are divided between those demonstrating cultural preferences (Lee & Kim, 2010) or scholarship obligations for return (Ziguras & Law, 2006), and those demonstrating differentiated and complex decision-making processes for return (Szelenyi, 2006). Another area of focus is determinants of return migration for highly-skilled professionals, particularly in the field of economics (e.g. Gibson & McKenzie, 2011).

Return has also been conceptualised as part of a long-term migration trajectory, and not necessarily the end of a particular exit. This dovetails nicely with the idea of brain circulation, evoking a positive image of flexible and autonomous citizens freely crossing national boundaries in pursuit of their transnational lifestyles. However, alternating leavings and returns could be due to difficulties faced at either sending or receiving societies. De Bree et al.'s (2010) study of Moroccan returnees from the Netherlands highlights the difficulties of re-integration into *emigration* societies. In addition, return is differentially negotiated depending on a returnee's socio-economic status, reasons for return, and whether they are first or

subsequent generation emigrations. In contrast, Salaff et al.'s (2010) study of Hong Kong returnees from Canada highlight how they face difficulties of cultural and professional integration in *immigration* societies, causing such migrant households to adopt “astronaut” migration trajectories of leaving/returning.

### 2.1.3 Studies on Malaysian Migration

Existing empirical research on mobile Malaysians’ migration has tended to focus on issues of brain drain and skilled migration. A special issue of the *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies* (Tyson, 2011), for example, positions Malaysia’s brain drain in relation to economics and population demography. While research on international migration of Malaysians has been prevalent, this is segregated into separate categories such as transnational migration (Lam & Yeoh, 2004; Lam, Yeoh, & Law, 2002), Chinese diaspora (Cartier, 2003), and student-migrants (Andressen, 1993; Gardiner & Hirst, 1990). Other approaches have analysed international migration on a macro-economic (Pillai, 1992; Pillai & Yusof, 1998), demographic (Hugo, 2011) or historical (Wang, 1985) perspectives.

On the other hand, there has been much more attention on *internal* migration and the development implications (Jones & Sidhu, 1979; Pryor, 1979a; Saw, 1980; Saw, 2005). Pryor’s (1974) study has identified geographical implications of internal migration in Peninsular Malaysia, although there appears to be a lack of research attention since. Nagata’s (1974) study of Malay internal migration in the northern states of Perlis, Kedah, and Penang highlights the circular mobility patterns and significance of *kampong* (lit. “village”, used to connote “hometown”) as perpetual home for these internal “migrants”.<sup>7</sup> Given the significance of race in the social stratification of Malaysian society, some research has examined whether race – usually politely referred to as “ethnicity” – affects internal migration (Chitose, 2001, 2003; Hirschman & Yeoh, 1979). Casting the glance beyond the mobility of Malaysians, Hing’s (2000) study highlights how ethnic-migration – both internal migration and incoming foreigners – produces boundaries between “us” and “them” vis-à-vis discourses of national belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

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<sup>7</sup> I follow-up on this point in **Chapter 6**.

#### 2.1.4 Existing Gaps and Ways Forward

In the literature, skilled migration has been analysed as a specific type of migration. This produces three implications that in turn reinforce the “special” nature of skilled migrants. Firstly, skilled migrants are seen as flexible citizens (Ong, 1999) who have more resources and agency in their migration trajectories. Secondly, there is still a tendency to assume that skilled migrants are primarily motivated by economic factors, despite works highlighting other factors such as marriage, gender roles and household decision-making. Thirdly, and consequently, state strategies to attract skilled migrants have also been premised upon economic factors and rhetoric derived from economic logic.

This means that skilled migrants are still primarily viewed as privileged migrants. Furthermore, they may be automatically excluded from discussions of other types of migration which may be relevant to their migration experience (e.g. student migration). While recent works challenge the universal and privileged view of transnational skilled migrants by highlighting the nuanced and diverse experiences of transnational mobility (e.g. Ley, 2010; Lin, 2012), little has been done in analysing skilled migration from a whole life migration perspective. Exceptions, however, are in contributions towards the gendered dimension of skilled and transnational migration (Raghuram, 2000; Yeoh & Willis, 2005).

Some recent work has touched upon the social and political complexities of skilled migration decision-making. However, these complexities are often discussed specifically as *return* migration decisions, and not as *emigration* decisions (with few exceptions concerning the relationship between gender and migration). This means that the migration process and experience has been truncated and analysed in isolation from each migration stage. Thus, there is a lack of a holistic perspective in understanding skilled migration. This includes, for example, the interrelationships between student, marriage, and skilled migration.

In regards to empirical work on Malaysian migration, existing studies have examined specific types, and aspects of migration phenomena. However, I argue that there are two obvious gaps thus far. First, these studies similarly suffer from the clear segregation of migration types and stages present in studies on migration. An example is the distinct segregation between internal and international migration. Second, and consequently, by using assumed concepts – inherited from Western and Eurocentric traditions due to the colonial connection – without critical interrogation, these studies obscure nuanced aspects specific to the Malaysian context. These include race, social class, education-induced migration, geographical implications, and



circulatory mobility throughout the life course. Next, I discuss how a postcolonial approach is useful in addressing gaps in migration literature generally and Malaysia's migration specifically.

### **Postcolonial Approach**

Postcolonial theory has been useful in contributing towards understandings of migration, particularly the diasporic experience (e.g. Dwyer, 2000). However, as Mains et al. (2013, p. 133) note, "the potential for postcolonial theory to fundamentally change how we understand migration is underexplored within geography and within the social sciences more generally". Indeed, there are studies on post-colonial migration flows from former colonies to the former colonial power, such as migrants from Indonesia and the Indies to the Netherlands (Oostindie, 2010), Caribbean migrants to and from Britain (Chamberlain 1997), and Latin American migrants to Britain (McIlwaine, 2008). These have tended to focus on the migration experience, viewed from migrants' perspectives. However, although these experiences are situated within structures of colonialism, there has been little engagement with what a postcolonial lens might uncover for migration studies. In other words, existing studies tend to take the post-colonial temporal frame to investigate post-colonial migration flows, and not the postcolonial analytical frame to examine how colonial legacies influence and implicate upon migration.

There are, however, tangential developments adopting a postcolonial analytical approach in development studies and studies on migration-development nexus. Kothari's (2006b, 2006c) works on former colonial officers-turned modern development professionals highlight how colonial discourses, imaginaries and practices continue to circumscribe the logics and operations of the international development aid industry. Furthermore, Kothari (2006a) highlights the silencing of race in development discourse, despite of the continued "legacy of colonial forms of racial distinction" (p. 10) and assumptions in the functioning of the development industry. Along a similar approach, Raghuram (2009b) questions the uncritical assumptions underlying the migration-development nexus that migrants bear the responsibility as development agents for their home countries. While she did not explicitly claim to use a postcolonial analytical lens in this piece of work, her approach of questioning Eurocentric assumptions of development echoes that of Kothari's.

In her other works on brain drain and student migration documented in a special issue in *Geoforum* on "postcoloniality, responsibility and care", Raghuram and colleagues have raised the issue of care and responsibility towards these specific types of migrants, as well as the production and reproduction of power hierarchies across spatialities and temporalities

(Raghuram, Madge & Noxolo, 2009). For example, her article on the migration of health professionals shows how various stakeholders – including academics – become “implicit and complicit actors producing the terrain” (Raghuram, 2009a, p. 29) within which the issue of brain drain *can* be discussed. In another article employing a postcolonial analysis on international students, Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo (2009) call for an “engaged pedagogy”, one that goes beyond the responsibility of teaching, but instead focuses on a broader social ethics of being “care-ful” (p. 43) to the continued salience of colonial legacies and power hierarchies in knowledge production and reproduction.

While these articles deal with migration phenomena, the more important point is their adoption of postcolonial approaches. In doing so, they challenge the dominance and assumed superiority of colonial perspectives. Postcolonial approaches highlight the overlapping spatialities of “here” and “there”, as well as the continued significance of colonialism-informed knowledges, institutions and practices. Projecting this theoretical insight back onto migration phenomena then enables a more nuanced and historically-grounded understanding of how and why migration in a certain context occurs in specific ways. Subsequently, this insight can then better inform migration-related policies, either within a national boundary, or at an international arena.

As I have explained in **Section 1.4.1**, postcolonial approach to migration addresses gaps in migration literature in four ways. First, it enables an examination of the interactions between macro-structures and micro-agency. This contributes, at least in part, to challenge the persistent dichotomy between macro- and micro-foci in migration studies. Second, it offers the opportunity to situate migration phenomena under a temporal lens. This addresses the lack of continuity in theorising and understanding migration through a longitudinal and historical perspective – especially in the case of skilled migration literature. Third, it enables a critical examination of key migration concepts (e.g. citizenship, migration, state-citizen relationship) by contextualising this with colonial legacies during the colonial and post-colonial periods. This challenges and enriches existing migration concepts that have been predominantly informed by Anglo-Western experiences. Finally, it offers the space for bottom-up and non-mainstream voices. This advances existing migration literature by providing a diversity of perspectives, from which insights could be drawn to enhance existing migration theories.

Adopting a postcolonial approach to analyse Malaysia’s migration is also useful in a few ways. First, it offers a historically-contextualised perspective in which to situate and understand Malaysia’s migration. Second, and relatedly, it opens up the space to examine how colonial

legacies matter to Malaysia's contemporary migration, through engagement with issues of race, social class, and a culture of migration. An examination of how these issues relate specifically in the Malaysian context offers opportunities to draw broader, theoretical conclusions that could be useful to understand other empirical contexts where these issues may also have relevance. In other words, this approach is helpful in addressing gaps in the literature on Malaysian migration I identified earlier (the segregation between internal and international migration; and the lack of critical examination of migration concepts and their relevance to non-Anglo-Western contexts), with broader theoretical and empirical implications for understanding migration in other contexts.

In sum, a postcolonial approach is useful for the purpose of this thesis because it enables an engagement with, and interrogation of, colonial legacies and how they matter to contemporary migration – theoretically and empirically. In the next section, I review literature on postcolonialism and colonial legacies, with a focus on discussing the extent to which colonialism can be held responsible for the resultant material and immaterial legacies.

## **2.2 Postcolonialism and Colonial Legacies**

According to McEwan (2009a, p. 17, original italics), postcolonialism refers to “a *temporal* aftermath” (i.e. a period after colonialism) as well as “a *critical* aftermath” (i.e. phenomena that exist beyond the end of a colonial period, but continue to be influenced by colonialism). While postcolonial studies originally flourished from the disciplines of English literature, history and philosophy, postcolonial approaches have also been taken up in the disciplines of geography, anthropology and development (Kumar, 2011). A key concern in postcolonial studies is the critique of Eurocentrism. This is typically explored by “problematizing, deconstructing and de-centering the supposed universality of Western knowledge” (Kothari, 2005, p. 255) across two domains: firstly, the production of knowledge, which is criticised as deriving from Eurocentric experiences and epistemologies that are then imposed upon non-European contexts; and secondly, the creation of the Oriental “other” (Said, 1995) or the subaltern (Spivak, 1988) who continues to have their voice(s) regulated and (mis)represented by an unequal global landscape dominated by Eurocentrism.

In this section, I review existing postcolonial studies addressing issues of colonial legacies in both *material* and *immaterial* forms. Material colonial legacies are tangible consequences such as education systems, governance structures, and citizenship legislations. Immaterial colonial

legacies are intangible consequences such as inter-ethnic relations, state-society relations, and the construction of identities influenced by cultural essentialism.

Of course, some colonial legacies may exist in both material and immaterial forms. For example, racial stereotypes introduced by colonialism could be institutionalised in material forms in policies and constitutional rights. At the same time, racial stereotypes as “truths” could take immaterial forms as they are socialised into people’s beliefs and perceptions that influence social relations between different “racial” groups. Furthermore, both material and immaterial forms are never static – they necessarily co-constitute each other, resulting in a vicious cycle.

### **2.2.1 Material and Immaterial Legacies**

#### **Racial/Ethnic Identity and Inequalities**

Postcolonial studies have shed light on how racial ideology, legitimised by discourses of “biological science” and “development”, supported colonial and imperial expansions. Here, I review how some scholars have discussed the effects of racial/ethnic identity and inequalities in former colonies during the post-colonial period. In particular, I pay attention to issues of differential access to political rights and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies. My purpose is to demonstrate how racial/ethnic identities and the associated inequalities are products of a dialectical and “complex amalgam of economic and racial factors ... anchoring the present to the colonial past” (Loomba, 1998, p. 129).

Based on the African context, Mamdani argues for the need “to historicize race and ethnicity as political identities undergirded and reproduced by colonial institutions” (2001, p. 652). He argues that the colonial state distinguished between race and ethnicity *politically*. Thus, race and ethnicity are products of colonial intervention, which were subsequently reproduced by mainstream African nationalists during the post-colonial period. However, Cooper (2005, p. 184) warns that Mamdani’s (1996) argument – that “[c]olonialism fostered the ethnicization of Africa” – neglects to take into account the influences of non-colonialist actors during the final stages of colonial rule in Africa. In other words, while colonialism materialised race and ethnicity into political identities in colonial Africa, it is the transition period towards post-colonial independence that embedded these into constitutional legalities.

In her introduction to a special issue on ethnic minorities in post-colonial Southeast Asian states, Miller (2011a) discusses issues surrounding unequal inclusions/exclusions subjected

upon these ethnic minorities as citizens or subjects. This includes: firstly, the democratic principle; secondly, colonial legacies; and thirdly, citizenship and belonging. With regards to colonial legacies, Miller argues that these post-colonial states continue to perpetuate racial stereotypes that were inherited as colonial legacies in the first place. Furthermore, she highlights that the reproduction of racial distinctions privileging the dominant ethnic group was also pursued because it accords legitimacy to post-colonial governments. While Miller refers to racial stereotypes and colonial legacies, her concern is with equality of rights that should be accorded to ethnic minorities. However, her contribution shows how a colonial historical perspective enables a better understanding of how minorities and their associated unequal rights came about.

Shin (2010) takes a similar approach to explain the origins and persistence of ethno-racial inequality in Japan's immigration policies and social perceptions towards specific ethno-racial migrant groups. First, he traces the transition from colonial to post-colonial Japan through the cases of Korean colonial migrants, colonial officers, and Japanese colonial and post-colonial institutions. Second, he analyses contemporary Japanese immigration policies and public attitudes towards *Nikkeijin* (descendants of ethnic Japanese emigrants in Latin America and the Philippines). The first shows how colonial Korean immigrants and their descendants were placed at the top of a hierarchical classification of immigrants, thus relegating newly-arrived immigrants to the bottom of the hierarchy. The second shows how the historically-informed asymmetrical relations between Japanese citizens and immigrants became reproduced by the post-war Japanese state. Taking both accounts together, Shin argues that "underneath the so-called democratic transition and de-colonization was in fact "old wine in a new bottle"" (p. 340). Although this has not been explicitly articulated, Shin's analysis demonstrates the longevity of colonial legacies in producing and reproducing ethno-racial hierarchies and unequal rights that continue to exist during the post-colonial period.

In regard to multi-ethnic post-colonial contexts, Goh's (2008, p. 234) observation is particularly telling:

*... the nationalist elites who inherited the legacies of colonialism also inherited a racial state and its pluralist worldview. Resulting separatist ethnonationalisms and ethnic conflict are symptoms of the continued operation of the racial state, and ironically, symptoms that confirmed its pluralist model. In such a situation where the political effects of colonial racialization are acute and traverse the entire length and breadth of state-society relationship, the problem of multiculturalism revolves around the question of whether the ruling group could establish itself as the transcultural elite who can legitimately define the distribution of the economic spoils of national development to ethnic groups.*

Thus, in the cases of post-colonial Malaysia and Singapore, the transition from pluralism to racialised multiculturalism actually demonstrates the continued perpetuation of racial stereotypes and categorisation. Furthermore, this post-colonial state-defined multiculturalism has been socially constructed to legitimise unequal distribution of resources amongst the population. In this way, the longevity of colonial legacies plays out in material and immaterial ways: the former in terms of unequal access to rights and benefits; the latter in terms of socialised racial hierarchies.

### **Education**

There is no doubt that colonial rule established school systems and institutionalised education in the colonies. Here, I focus on discussing the long-term effects of school systems and educational curriculum in the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and cultural essentialism. This can be analysed across two domains: first, between the “superior” former colonial power and the “inferior” former colony; and second, between different ethnic groups within the former colony, arranged along an arbitrary racial hierarchy.

For the former, Tikly (1999) argues that an understanding of the postcolonial condition is necessary to advance a more holistic and less Eurocentric reading of the relationship between globalisation and education. Furthermore, he highlights that “little attention was paid to the ways in which colonial legacy “worked its way back” to the imperial centre through migration and the implications of these processes for education” (p. 610). In other words, while he has not explicitly identified contemporary education migration as a product of colonial legacies, his statement implies that colonialism may have contributed to the flows of education migration from post-colonial contexts to their former colonisers.

For the latter, Watson (1993) argues that one of the most long-lasting British colonial legacies in Malaysia and Singapore is the education system. Firstly, British colonial rule established four parallel school systems based on racial/ethnic cultures. Second, racial stereotypes and perceptions of racial hierarchies are perpetuated through the racially-streamed education system and school curriculum. Although Watson claims for the longevity of these colonial legacies, he stops short at casually mentioning their translation into Malaysia’s positive discrimination policies.

Nevertheless, his contribution highlights that the education system is a means through which hierarchical racial perceptions continue to be perpetuated even after the end of colonial rule.

In this way, one can see the immaterial longevity of colonial legacies that are institutionalised materially into the education system. Indeed, this is also Tilman's (1964, p. 59) observation:

*The impact of education affected the course of Malayan development both positively and negatively. On the one hand, British-sponsored education, particularly the English-language education, provided the means for achieving vertical social mobility and thus in a very direct manner was responsible for the creation of a Westernized elite that today permeates both the bureaucratic and political fields. On the other hand, the corresponding neglect of Chinese education by the British contributed to the separateness of the immigrant community and in no small measure prevented free communication among the several groups.*

### **Political System and Democracy**

Colonial intervention also has significant impacts on the political system and distribution of political power in former colonies (see Lange, 2004). For example, Centeno and Enriquez (2010) explain how the mechanisms of empire led to the institutional foundation of post-colonial states, specifically in five areas. "Mechanisms of empire" is defined as "the political domination of a variety of groups and territories, where distinctions are made between privileged ruling people and a mass who owes allegiance to the ruling elite, but who may not expect reciprocity" (p. 346). This includes firstly, administration and national bureaucracy; secondly, state finance; thirdly, imperial development and state investment; fourthly, identity to nationalism; and finally, imperial inequality. Adopting Charles Tilly's analytical reasoning – particularly the concept of "durable inequalities" (Tilly, 1998) – Centeno and Enriquez suggest how imperial phenomena translates into post-colonial modern state outcomes. Other than formal institutions (i.e. material outcomes), the transition from empire to modern nation-state also creates immaterial outcomes such as nationalism and related inequalities. The resultant inequalities include both "imperial ethnicity" (Darwin, 2010) between the empire and former colony, as well as ethnic hierarchies within the post-colonial state.

In terms of post-colonial political systems inherited as colonial legacies, Kumarasingham's (2012) comparative study of India and Sri Lanka shows how the Westminster political system has been differentially inherited and adopted in each country. While India chose to adopt a flexible interpretation of the Westminster system to suit its federal structure, Sri Lanka chose to adopt the Westminster system literally. Thus, India was able to mitigate dissolution of the federal state by forming states based on ethnic and linguistic lines, while Sri Lanka suffered because her latent communalism was not taken into account in its post-colonial constitution. Kumarasingham's comparative analysis demonstrates how India and Sri Lanka continue to deal with British colonial legacies politically in the form of the government system, albeit with

differing consequences. This suggests that while colonialism introduced a certain government system, some post-colonial states have been able to adapt the inherited legacies to suit their contextual needs.

Indeed, Go (2002) made a similar observation. In his study of newly-independent post-colonial states in Asia and Africa, he finds that their constitutions were largely modelled after those of their former colonial states, especially in terms of governmental forms. However, specific constitutional provisions relating to religion, socialist and one-party systems, and fundamental rights differ from that of the former colonial states. For example, while Malaysia's constitution is largely based on the British model, it differs in two ways: firstly, by incorporating provisions relating to the Islamic religion which were referenced from constitutions of other Islamic states (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria); and secondly, by incorporating a section on fundamental liberties referenced from India's independence constitution (which was modelled after the US Bill of Rights).

Using Malaysia and Pakistan as case studies, Nasr (2001, p. 47) argues that:

*Colonialism gave these states their machinery of government, ideologies of rule, and social structure. Indirect rule saddled the future states with obstacles before their exercise of power and provided them with little with which to manage mass politics. The absence of a struggle for independence denied the states strong ideological moorings.*

While Nasr's focus is on the implications of the colonial legacy on Islam and state power, his argument highlights the longevity of colonialism that becomes embedded into the socio-political structures in post-colonial states. Specifically, he identifies how the British colonial administration "perpetuated the myth of Malay sovereignty" (p. 35), symbolised by the Malay Sultans presiding over their respective Malay states, which are collectively governed through a centralised federal administrative system. This results in the "apparent anomaly between political decentralisation and administrative centralisation" (p. 36), which continues to underlie the political structure of the post-colonial Malaysian state. Nasr also identifies how the British colonial rule created a Malay bureaucratic elite class through education and the civil service. After Malaya gained independence from the British, this elite group eventually "form the core of the bureaucratic elite and leadership of UMNO [i.e. the dominant political party]" (p. 36).

The examples above show that colonial legacies – in terms of political system and constitutional law – largely circumscribe these aspects of the post-colonial state. However, specific details could differ from that of the former colonial state. This is not to dilute the



longevity of colonial legacies on the political development of post-colonial states. Rather, the examples above show that colonial legacies predetermine the broad political structures of post-colonial states. Where divergences exist, they were only possible because of specific contextual conditions (e.g. the dominant Malay political voice in Malaysia) and/or historical timing at the point of post-colonial transition.

Indeed, Case (2003) suggests that the post-colonial late industrialisation period enables local political elites to capitalise upon the transition window to amass their political, economic, and social powers. Using Mills' (1956) power elite thesis, Case discusses how "persistent authoritarianism" took place in Singapore and Malaysia by demonstrating how preeminent national leaders practised elite interlock strategies (i.e. simultaneously holding leadership positions in political government, bureaucratic administration, corporate directorate, etc.) to suit their specific contexts. Most importantly, Case argues that these opportunistic practices have strong implications for regime outcomes in the respective post-colonial nation-states. In short, state apparatuses introduced and institutionalised by colonial powers led to material and immaterial forms of political power amongst local elites who were placed in their positions of power by colonial rule in the first place.

Colonial rule has often been legitimised as bringing "development" and "civilisation" to undeveloped or under-developed colonies. This can be thought of in terms of democracy and state-society relations, as well as the extent to which citizens can exercise civic rights collectively and individually. To investigate whether and how democracy takes place in post-colonial Malaysia, Weiss (2005) traces the development of Malaysian civil society organisations (CSO). She shows that Malaysian CSOs are organised along racial lines in terms of composition, scope of advocacy, techniques and nature of engagement with the state. Malay and Islamic interests, for example, continue to be privileged by the post-colonial Malaysian government due to electoral purposes – which were set up by the British colonial administration in the first place.

Weiss argues that British colonial policies had set the stage for state-civil society relationships in post-colonial Malaysia in three ways. Firstly, there has been persistent racial stratification of the public sphere; secondly, there exists cross-racial differences in modes of state-society engagement; and finally, there has been a focus on the development of citizenship skills for some CSOs and autonomous self-regulation for others. In short, her study shows how British colonial legacies – particularly in the form of race as social stratification factor – continue to influence democracy and state-society relations in post-colonial Malaysia.

### 2.2.2 Putting the Responsibility on Colonial Legacies?

*The engine of colonialism turns in a circle; it is impossible to distinguish between its praxis and objective necessity. Moments of colonialism, they sometimes condition one another and sometimes blend.*

Sartre (2003, p. 23)

*It seems to me that the idea of a 'Malay race' was a product primarily of the colonial period, but it was not formulated solely by Europeans. It was 'localized' - re-crafted with considerable ideological skills by local intellectuals, and in ways that have led to confusion in some modern sociological analysis.*

Milner (2010, p. 11)

It is obvious from my review in the previous section that colonial rule has left material and immaterial legacies in former colonies. Some of these legacies continue to pose challenges for the respective post-colonial states as they move their countries forward after independence. However, to what extent can we place the responsibility entirely on the colonial, while viewing the post-colonial as a passive agent limited by colonial legacies? Here, there are generally four views. The first cautions against “leapfrogging legacies” (Cooper, 2005), i.e. drawing direct links between colonialism as causes without accounting for other processes such as globalisation. This perspective also includes acknowledging pre-existing circumstances before the arrival of colonial powers. The second argues that colonial legacies created deeply-entrenched problems, thus leaving some post-colonial states with no choice but to resort to treating “manifested symptoms of the problems” (Piang, 2012, pp. 350-351).

The third takes a middle point and acknowledges that the agency of some post-colonial states as they creatively adapted colonial legacies to suit their objectives and contexts. For example, Schneider highlights that colonial *institutional* legacies are not “passive inheritance”, and suggests that “discussion must focus on an examination of fluid historical processes and practices and not postulate rigid and unchanging structures” (2006, p. 113). The fourth, advocated by historians, highlights key roles played by individual colonial officials, their ethos, educational and work experiences in shaping their understanding and policy attitudes towards the colonial populations (e.g. Goh, 2007; Loh, 1975). While this final perspective does not directly address the issue of colonial legacies, it reminds us that there are divergent and contradicting views *within* the colonial administration.

Here, I will take an integrative reading of the four perspectives. It is true that it would be very difficult to put the responsibility entirely on colonialism and its legacies. To begin with, “cultural baggage” left by “transplantive or replicative colonialism” versus “intrusive and oppressive colonialism” are radically different (Oommen, 1997a, p. 8). In the post-colonial period, macro processes such as globalisation and industrialisation also need to be taken into account. However, whether the colonial legacies are easy to change or not depends on the post-colonial state’s capacity and agency. Furthermore, this is also dependent on *inter*-state and *intra*-state power politics. Post-colonial federal states, for example, would need to negotiate intra-state interests and politics. This also depends on their respective jurisdictions, as well as the governance structure inherited from colonial rule. In multi-ethnic post-colonial states, such as Malaysia, this is further complicated by *inter*-ethnic and *intra*-ethnic power politics.

This goes on naturally to the second perspective, which sees colonial legacies leaving deeply-entrenched structures in the post-colonial society. These can be both material and immaterial consequences. For example, governance structures and constitutional legislations may circumscribe the distribution of unequal rights and power to different stakeholders in the state and the society respectively. At the same time, racial stereotypes and inter-ethnic relationships created during colonial rule could have influenced how social actors during the post-colonial period enact subsequent policies. In this way, colonial legacies continue to impact upon policies enacted *after* the end of colonial rule, but which were conceptualised based on beliefs introduced by colonialism into the psyche of the society.

The third and fourth perspectives acknowledge the agency of, and within, both the categories of “colonial state” and “post-colonial state”. While this needs to be taken into consideration, I argue that these individual agency collectively contribute towards forces of colonialism (and postcolonialism), which are further translated into structural and epistemic legacies with long-term effects. In other words, agency – individual and institutional – contribute towards the constitution of colonial legacies, leaving remnants in various aspects of social life during the post-colonial period.

At this point, have we arrived at an impasse? Here, I find De L’Estoile (2008, p. 277) cautionary note useful:

*Colonial legacies are not univocal but contradictory, reflecting the complex and contradictory character of colonial relations themselves. They are not passively received, and their meaning is actively reinterpreted and renegotiated. Far from establishing an inventory of ‘colonial holdovers’ to get rid of, it would try to understand how colonial*

*legacies shape in contradictory ways today's modes of relationships and self-understandings, both in Europe and in former colonial dependencies, and how people confront them.*

Indeed, the literature I have reviewed demonstrates the contradictory and highly-contextualised experiences of colonialism. It also shows how specific colonial legacies are inherited and/or reconfigured during the transition from the colonial to the post-colonial period. However, I wish to reiterate again the longevity of colonial legacies – especially in *immaterial* forms – that continue to regulate and circumscribe social relations, power inequalities, and subsequent social behaviours within and beyond post-colonial states.

### **2.3 Citizenship, National Identity and Loyalty**

The transition from colonial rule to post-colonial independence entails the forging of modern nation-states and the constitution of citizenship – sometimes when the notion of Western liberal citizenship did not exist previously. As such, colonial legacies also impact upon the meanings and significance of citizenship vis-à-vis national identity and loyalty. In this section, I begin by reviewing existing theoretical literature on citizenship, national identity and loyalty. I then focus on existing empirical literature focusing on race/ethnicity, national identity and loyalty in the Malaysian context. In doing so, I highlight the gaps between theoretical understandings of citizenship predominantly derived from Eurocentric experiences, and that experienced and negotiated in a multi-ethnic, post-colonial context through the Malaysian case.

I will not be reviewing literature on citizenship and migration in detail – such as works on transnational citizenship, migrants' citizenship rights, membership, and the politics of identity and belonging (e.g. Bauböck, 1995; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Brubaker, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2007). This is because my purpose is to discuss the meanings of, and relationships between, the concepts of citizenship, national identity and loyalty from a postcolonial perspective that is appropriate for this study set in the multi-ethnic, post-colonial Malaysian context.

#### **2.3.1 Theorising Citizenship**

##### **Western versus Non-Western**

*Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community.*

Marshall (1950, p. 28)

The origin of citizenship, as understood in the Western liberal tradition, has been attributed to the Athenian *polis* or city-state. In this context, citizenship came about through the collective institutionalising of a state, which protects the collective citizenry against threats. In return, citizens obey the rule of law. However, Athenian citizenship is not universally available to all residents. Only men “with the material means, personal breeding and leisure to perform their civic duties” (Kabeer, 2006, pp. 91-92) were included as citizens, while women and slaves were not. This exclusive nature of citizenship continued to be practised in Medieval Europe. Struggles for equal and common citizenship continue to take place throughout history, including the opposition of feudal-vassal relationships during the Enlightenment period, and the revolution for fundamental rights for the popular citizenry vis-à-vis elite groups during the French and American revolutions.

The Western liberal citizenship model in modern nation-states can be understood from Marshall’s (1950) seminal essay *Citizenship and Social Class*, which focuses on equal citizenship rights conferred to people across all social classes. According to Marshall, citizenship consists of three components: the *civil* refers to rights associated with individual freedom; the *political* refers to rights to exercise political power; and the *social* refers to rights to share in the social life of the society. Marshall particularly emphasised access to education as “a genuine social right of citizenship” (p. 25). He further argued that because education is linked to occupational structure and hence social mobility, “citizenship operates as an instrument of social stratification” (p. 67). Although Marshall’s work pushed for an understanding of how citizenship is related to social inequalities, his theory of citizenship has also been criticised as Anglo-centric, limited in universality, ethnocentric and gender-biased (see Dwyer, 2010).

While writers such as Max Weber have argued for a universal, “ideal-type” citizenship from the Western perspective, this view has also been challenged by scholars in citizenship and migration studies (Isin & Wood, 1999; Young, 1989). Indeed, citizenship in non-Western contexts developed through a different trajectory. In China, for example, the conceptualisation of citizenship has shifted during the transition from the late Qing Empire to the Republic era. During the late Imperial period, social relations were organised around hierarchical relationships between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and rulers and subjects. In transiting to the modern Republic, reformist intellectuals and political leaders advocated an alternative conceptualisation of citizenship – one that emphasises civic/political agency and participation. During this era, three terms were used to connote citizenship: *guomin* (lit. “national citizen”), *gongmin* (lit. “civic citizen”), and *shimin* (lit. “city resident”). As Culp (2007, p. 1837) notes:

*Although all these terms were translations of 'citizen', they were inflected in different ways that aligned with the distinct dimensions of citizenship ... Guomin emphasized national membership and the individual's identification with a national community. Gongmin stressed the individual's participation in the public life of his or her community, participation that could be formalized in political institutions or expressed through social action or cultural expression in the public sphere. Shimin shared some of the meanings of civic participation incorporated in the term gongmin, but it also suggested a claim to certain privileges incumbent on being a member of an urban community. Such claims were fundamental to social citizenship. The layering of these terms in early twentieth-century China reflected the practical and conceptual complexities of citizenship as a category of identity and form of action.*

According to Chouinard (2009, p. 107), citizenship refers to

*... particular ways of being situated within and responding to relations of power through which a community is governed or ruled. It involves claiming, exercising, and contesting rights, entitlements, and obligations (e.g., rights to vote and strike, the obligation to pay taxes) and diverse ways of engaging with the institutions (such as the state) and relations through which communities are constituted and governed.*

As the late-Qing Chinese case shows, the transition from Imperial rule to modernity saw the complexities in negotiating the meanings and practices of “citizenship” – which is different from the Western liberal citizenship in the first place. Furthermore, citizenship models derived from the Western experience may not be relevant to understand the Asian context.<sup>8</sup> As Miller (2011b: p. 809) highlights:

*Unlike most Western liberal democracies, Asia is strewn with multiethnic societies that inherited national borders from their colonial masters in the recent post-Second World War period of decolonization. This has led to the incorporation of heterogeneous indigenous minorities whose pre-existing loyalties and identities have not always sat comfortably alongside the nation-building projects of post-colonial states.*

Thus, it is important to understand the contextual circumstances contributing towards the conceptualisation, constitution and practices of citizenship. In other words, it is crucial to understand the citizenship habitus of a particular society.

### **Dimensions and Realms of Citizenship**

Theoretical debates on citizenship can be said to have evolved through three broad shifts. The first focuses on citizenship as a social contract between an individual citizen and the citizenship-conferring political entity, i.e. the nation-state (e.g. Rousseau, 1968). This perspective sees the nation-state taking care of the citizen, who is obligated to the nation-

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<sup>8</sup> An understanding of citizenship as inherited and interpreted in the Chinese context is important to contextualise my respondents' – especially those who are of Chinese ethnicity – interpretations and enactments of citizenship in **Chapter 8**.

state in return. The second considers how globalization and transnational migration pose challenges to the concept of citizenship (e.g. Bauböck, 2009, 2011; Castles & Davidson, 2000). Thus, scholars have used terms such as transnational (Bauböck, 1995), postnational (Soysal, 1994), cosmopolitan (Delanty, 2000), multi-layered (Yuval-Davis, 2006), multicultural (Kymlicka, 1995) and diasporic (Laguerre, 1997) in attempts to describe the varied forms citizenship might take. Finally, the third focuses on citizenship as political practices and enactments (e.g. Erel, 2009; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Staeheli, 2011). In other words, this perspective sees citizenship as a verb instead of a noun.

**Table 2.1: Dimensions and Realms of Citizenship**

		Dimension of citizenship	
		<i>Reciprocal state-citizen ties</i>	<i>Public recognition of ties</i>
Realm of membership	<i>Legal-constitutional</i>	Rights and duties of citizens	Nationality/ supra-nationality/ dual nationality
	<i>Political-institutional</i>	Access to rights and political participation; enforcing duties	Recognition of identities other than nation: religion, language, cultural customs and practices, etc.

Source: Adapted from Faist (2000)

Conceptually, these three broad shifts demonstrate differential focus on different aspects of citizenship. This includes: firstly, the *contents* of citizenship (i.e. different types of rights); secondly, the *boundaries* of citizenship (i.e. who is included or excluded); and thirdly, *the multiplicities in dimensions and realms* of citizenship, incorporating notions of identity versus membership, and rights versus duties (**Table 2.1**). Faist's (2000) conceptualisation of "dimension of citizenship" and "realm of membership" brings attention to the co-existence and tensions of *contractual* (i.e. legal-constitutional and political-institutional) and *societal* recognition of "citizenship" (e.g. national identity). Thus, it is insufficient to have citizenship rights recognised by formal legal-political institutions: citizenship also entails *public* recognition of social membership, and consequently, associations with social identities typically tied at the national scale. In other words, even if citizenship is conflated with national identity from the perspectives of the individual, this does not automatically mean that his/her "national loyalty" is rewarded with legal-constitutional and/or public recognition as "true" members of the national polity.

Thus, citizenship carries different meanings depending on which aspects of citizenship are being highlighted, as well as the specific stakeholder's perspective. As citizenship is ultimately linked to rights, this means that the interpretations of citizenship could translate into real and material consequences for individuals, families and communities. Here, it is important to note that it is ultimately the interpretation of those who hold political power within the citizenship-conferring entity (i.e. nation-state) that counts.

### **Citizenship and National Identity**

*The nation is a territorial entity to which people have an emotional attachment and in which they invest a moral meaning; it is a homeland - ancestral or adopted. Nationality is the collective identity which the people of a nation acquire by identifying with the nation.*

Oommen (1997b, p. 33)

However, citizenship is also often associated with national identity or nationality. This becomes more complicated in multicultural, multi-ethnic and immigrant nation-states, where an overarching nationality may be either at odds with the ethnic and cultural diversities within the population, or exclude certain minority features at the expense of constructing a common national identity. Furthermore, in support of the discourse of citizenship as exclusivity, notions of loyalty and patriotism are often used as a gauge for inclusion/exclusion as citizens of a country. In the age of migration and globalisation, the multiple flows of migration have also resulted in the fear of immigrants as opportunistic “invaders” scheming to share the shrinking pie with “legitimate” citizens. These negative sentiments are equally subjected upon migrants of all kinds, including skilled migrants and ethnic minorities.

As Bénéï (2005, p. 13) notes, the “relationship of nationality and citizenship is a blurred one”. Citizenship, interpreted as formal *civic* membership to a political entity which comes with associated rights and duties, has often been conflated with nationality, interpreted as *cultural* belonging to a national entity with shared historical and cultural values at the national scale. Indeed, the link between citizenship with national identity has been extensively discussed in the literature. Miller (2000) takes an optimistic stance and argues that a shared sense of national solidarity does not conflict with minority group identities within the larger national polity. On the other hand, Oommen (1997b, p. 49) argues that citizenship should be delinked from notions of national identity:

*... the content of 'national identity' varies across continents; language, religion, tribe and race or their combinations make for it. And wherever the polity has more than one*



*identity group, the possibility of the dominant collectivity defining itself as the nation and confining others as ethnies is perennially present. This tendency can be partly curbed by (1) reconceptualizing nation as all those who have a common homeland and language - ancestral or adopted, and (b) using citizenship as an instrument of moderating the hegemony of the dominant nation with states. Precisely for this reason, citizenship should be delinked from national identity.*

In Miller's case, citizenship is conceptualised as active civic/political participation. National identity is necessary and crucial to the enactment of citizenry actions because it provides a common national sense of solitary belonging. For Oommen, however, citizenship is conceptualised as rights that are conferred on the basis of recognition as members of a national community. Those who are not recognised as belonging to that national community would not enjoy full citizenship rights.

The conflation of citizenship with nationality is especially evident in the British experience. As Karatani (2003) explains, the creation of British citizenship was repeatedly postponed until the British Nationality Act of 1981 was enacted. She argues that because Britain as a political unit evolved into a "global institution" above and beyond the nation-state (i.e. the British Empire, followed by the Commonwealth), the definition of "Britishness" – i.e. "what it means to 'belong' to Britain" (p. 3) – had to remain unspecified. In other words, in order to incorporate peoples of the growing British political unit, Britain's citizenship legislation has historically emphasised an inclusive, over-arching British subjecthood or nationality, rather than an exclusive, nation-bound citizenship. The "'fuzzy', 'vague' and 'malleable' nature of Britishness" (p. 3) thus contextualises the conflation of citizenship and nationality in the British experience.<sup>9</sup>

### **Citizenship, Loyalty and Patriotism**

As a result, citizenship – at least in the British and Commonwealth contexts – has been interlinked with notions of loyalty. Gorman (2006) suggests that the notion of British subjecthood is manifested in "loyalism", which is associated with a personal relationship to the sovereign. He further finds that (p. 21):

*Individual national allegiance and citizenship were both invested in the monarch, and this loyalty - subjecthood - provided the leavening factor of Empire. The colonies were tied to the crown through the institution of responsible government; the dependencies through the direct rule of the monarch. The demarcation between allegiance and*

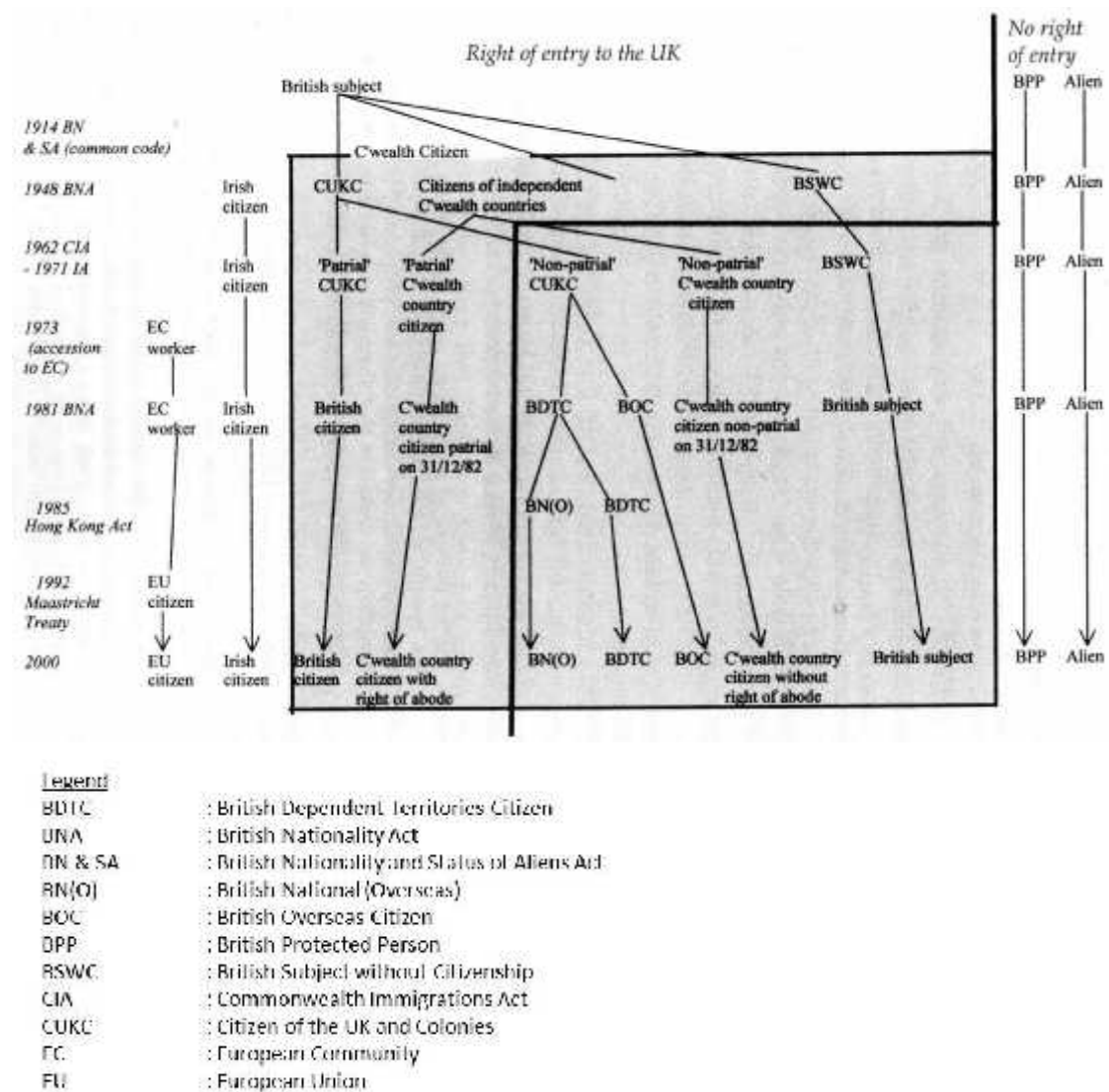
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<sup>9</sup> As I will later show in **Parts II** and **III**, the conflation of citizenship and nationality – which I argue is an inherited colonial legacy – is also apparent in the Malaysian experience.

*citizenship, though, was constantly evolving, as opposed to the static fusion of both identities in the constitution of a republic.*

Indeed, the expansion of the British Empire has resulted in the development of various types of citizenship, partially due to the need to take into account people's subjecthood in the various dominions and colonies (**Figure 2.1**). Significantly, debates surrounding the constitution of these citizenships and nationalities have been linked to concepts of loyalty and allegiance to the British crown. By extension, when citizenship was constituted in each specific colony – especially during the transition to post-colonial independence – this notion of loyalty has been automatically transferred to the post-colonial nation-state.

**Figure 2.1: Development of Various Types of Citizenship in Britain**



Source: Karatani (2003, p. 199)

Perhaps because citizenship carries with it certain privileges and rights, discourse surrounding the concept of citizenship has been intimately-linked with notions of loyalty and patriotism. According to Connor (2007, p. 79), however, there is a distinction between the two: “[l]oyalty is an emotion, whereas patriotism is an act”, i.e. “patriotism is the manifestation of loyalty”. He further explains (p. 78):

*National loyalty is the connection that one feels towards a particular nation. Generally it is to the nation of one's birth and one's allegiance is assumed, as merely being born in a country is usually enough to make one part of the nation. This loyalty is an emotional relationship that functions from the individual to the collective and vice versa. National loyalty fosters a sense of identity and belonging for the actor, helping to define who and what a person is. Conversely, national loyalty is expressed by the actions and behaviours of the people who make up the nation. There would be no nationalism but for the individuals and groups that engage in activities to support and encourage a sense of national identity.*

Two points in this explanation require further teasing out. First, since loyalty is an emotional relationship, this means that it is socially constructed, and therefore subject to change. Here, however, attention needs to be given to the object of loyalty: can it be assumed that it is the “national” that commands a citizen’s loyalty? Can there not be multiple loyalties attached to other entities such as family (Mulder, 1994) and ethnic communities? Can there also not be other objects of attachment that have been conflated with the “national”? Second, since national loyalty accords a sense of identity and belonging for the individual, this means that it is a form of relationship between the citizen and the citizenship-conferring entity. As Longva (1995, p. 199) explains:

*There is the loyalty which the collectivity to which we belong ascribes to us; and there is the loyalty we actually feel for this collectivity. The relationship between ascribed and felt loyalty is a complex one.*

If loyalty is conceptualised as a reciprocal relationship between the two, this enables us to understand how and why loyalty – an emotion – turns into patriotism – an action. In this way, the links between citizenship, national loyalty and patriotism can be established.

### **2.3.2 Malaysia’s Case**

*In Malaysia it is not sufficient to be a Malaysian, one has to have an ethnic identity.*

Tan (2000)

*Patriotism, the celebration of a society’s virtues, and the disparagement of the backwardness and the savagery of others have their roots in ethnocentrism.*

Hirschman (2004, p. 388)

In the Malaysian context, race/ethnicity, citizenship, national identity and loyalty are concepts that are complexly intertwined with each other. Existing literature in this regard has mostly focused on ethnic politics (Ratnam, 1965), multiculturalism and national integration (Lim, 1985; Oo, 1990; Ibrahim Saad, 1980), and the politics of belonging and ethnic/racial relations (Abraham, 1997; Lee, 2004). There is obviously extensive work examining the relationship between ethnic and national identity – often assumed as precursor to national integration and national unity (i.e. loyalty). In contrast, little attention has been focused on the relationship between ethnic/national identity and citizenship. This is perhaps attributable to the prioritisation of race/ethnicity as social categories, as well as the stickiness of Furnivall's (1948) "plural society" hypothesis, resulting in the preoccupation with "multi-ethnic Malaysia" (Lim, Gomes, & Rahman, 2009).

Although this also takes place in Singapore due to her colonial past as British Malaya, research has found slight differences in the post-colonial period. In their study of ethnic and national identity amongst undergraduate students in Malaysia and Singapore, Liu, Lawrence, Ward, and Abraham (2002) found that: firstly, Malaysians had a significantly stronger ethnic identity than Singaporeans; and secondly, Malaysians showed a preference for the ethnic label while the Singaporeans preferred the national label. Amongst the Malaysians, preference for the ethnic label was strongest for both the ethnic majority (i.e. Malays) and minority (i.e. non-Malays). However, there was "no sense of ethnic in-group ontogeny, or focus on creating a narrative about historical origins at the ethnic level" (p. 17) amongst Malaysian and Singaporean students. These results suggest strong correlation between socialised narratives of national history and ethnic and national identity. In other words, ethnic and national identities co-constitute each other.

In his theoretical discussion of ethnicity and national identity, Oommen (1997a) uses "ethnification" to explain processes through which ethnicity becomes the definitive factor in the collective recognition of membership associated with a territory. As he argues, the process of ethnification results in some groups perceived as outsiders and therefore never belonging to the nation. For the Malaysian context, Holst (2012) draws from Eder, Giesen, Schmidtke, and Tambini's (2002) "ethnicisation" to explain how race/ethnicity becomes deeply embedded in the Malaysian society; and subsequently takes on a life of its own in constructing and perpetuating racial/ethnic discourses, affecting all segments of the society including politicians, civil society activists, and students. Using both ethnification and ethnicisation in the Malaysian context, we can postulate explanations for the conflation of ethnic/racial and national identity on the one hand, and the politics of these identifications on the other.

More importantly, we can understand how and why a discourse of national loyalty has been invoked to counter and suppress ethnic/racial tensions. According to Shklar (1993, p. 184):

*... loyalty is ... deeply affective and not primarily rational. ... Belonging to an ascriptive group to which one has been brought up, and taught to feel loyal to it, since one's earliest infancy is scarcely a matter of choice. And when it comes to race, ethnicity, caste, and class, choice is not obvious. ... Political loyalty is evoked by nations, ethnic groups, churches, parties, and by doctrines, causes, ideologies, or faiths that form and identify associations.*

Indeed, in Malaysia's case, national loyalty has been ascribed by top-down forces such as government discourse and national education policies. Consequently, affiliation of cultural belonging to the nation – i.e. national identity – has been prioritised at the expense of political belonging – i.e. citizenship.

As Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri (2003, p. 2) note, “[the] attempt to forge a national identity requires the subsuming of other ethnic, gender or religious markers into a common affiliation with ‘the nation’”. Indeed, this has been the direction adopted by the post-colonial Malayan and Malaysian governments in negotiating tensions amongst the multi-ethnic populations in the territory. The tensions have been exacerbated by colonial legacies inherited from the British colonial period – especially those pertaining to racial stereotypes, racial hierarchy and Malay special rights. Thus, an examination of citizenship and national identity in Malaysia cannot be separated from the examination of race. This includes: firstly, the meanings of race and how this links up to interpretations and enactments of citizenship; and secondly, the stratification by racial/ethnic categories and how this affects the dynamic and reciprocal relationships between citizen, nation, and nation-state.

### **2.3.3 Existing Gaps and Ways Forward**

*The nationalist movements of the ex-colonial countries were explicitly political and oriented to state-building. These movements had been efforts to transform colonies into states and subjects into citizens. But at the height of anti-imperialist activity it was often forgotten that colonies were multi-national entities. The primary objective of the anti-imperialist struggle was to liberate the colonies from the foreign political yoke and establish self-governments. Understandably, though unfortunately, nations and states came to be treated as synonymous entities, creating as a consequence enormous conceptual confusion.*

Oommen (1997a, pp. 33-34)

*Depending on how the independence was negotiated, the ‘nation’ or ‘how the nation should be’, in most postcolonial countries, remains an unfinished agenda because the struggle for independence during the colonial era rarely takes a homogenous form,*

*especially, in a multiethnic or multicultural societies, such as Fiji, Malaysia, Guyana, Sri Lanka, Congo, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, and many more. In these countries, the 'state' exists for many decades after independence without an established nation.*

Shamsul Amri Baharuddin and Sity Daud (2006, p. 151)

In summary, theoretical debates about citizenship have never been divorced from their specific empirical, socio-political contexts. In the British experience, expansion of the Empire, combined with traditional notions of British subjecthood with allegiance to the monarch sovereign means that there has been a dual conflation: firstly, between citizenship and nationality; and secondly, between nation and state. This has implications for both theoretical understandings, as well as empirical consequences of citizenship, especially when such ideas are inevitably transferred to, and interpreted by post-colonial nation-states.

The meanings and significance of citizenship/nationality is complex. This is even more so for post-colonial, multi-ethnic immigrant states where the formation of nation-state coincided with the culmination of the end of empire, new international relations issues, as well as domestic inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic politics. This is important because the interpretations of citizenship/nationality ultimately implicate upon citizenship rights. Since rights are predicated upon citizenship membership, inclusion or exclusion could be based on formally-recognised ethnicity – which in itself is a socially-constructed concept – as membership to the post-colonial nation-state.

A way to get around this is to examine citizenship as practice – i.e. how citizenship has been interpreted and carried out by the citizenry. This goes beyond merely understanding “the personal context of national sentiments” (Mann & Fenton, 2009), and instead focuses on “actually existing citizenship” (Desforges, Jones & Woods, 2005, p. 448): how citizenship is carried out by citizen-subjects, based on their interpretations and understandings of what citizenship entails. As Ronkainen (2011, p. 248, original italics) suggests, “[o]nly when citizenship is studied as *practices* ... do the hypothetically associated possibilities and problems to [citizenship] status get their meanings and contents”. In the next section, I discuss how Bourdieu’s notion of habitus is useful in this regard, before developing my concept of citizenship habitus. My suggestion is to use citizenship habitus as a postcolonial analytical lens to understand and examine two interrelated processes: first, how the Malaysian citizenship comes to be constituted, interpreted and internalised by Malaysian citizens; and second, how this affects Malaysia’s contemporary migration phenomena, otherwise known as skilled emigration and/or brain drain.

## **2.4 Towards Citizenship Habitus**

### **2.4.1 Habitus**

In *Outline of A Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu (1977, p. 72) defines habitus as

*systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.*

In other words, habitus is a kind of “socialised subjectivity” (Setten, 2009, p. 1), taking the form of a belief system of social norms. These social norms – incorporating ways of knowing and codes of conduct – provide the framework and rules informing an individual member of that social group how to act and behave. It is important to note that these “rules” are not understood as regulations or sets of laws to be enforced. Rather, they are customs, conventions and accepted ways of practising that have been *internalised* as “normal” and “correct” ways of conduct.

In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990, p. 54) goes on to elaborate on the historicity of habitus:

*The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices - more history - in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. This system of dispositions - a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted - is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it; and also of the regulated transformations that cannot be explained either by the extrinsic, instantaneous determinisms of mechanistic sociology or by the purely internal but equally instantaneous determination of spontaneist subjectivism.*

In such conceptualisation, habitus is contextually specific to a particular entity with a unique combination of social, economic, political, cultural and geographical factors – i.e. a *place*. As habitus is accumulated through the passage of time and passed on from generations to generations, it becomes an internalised form of cultural knowledge. Here, Bourdieu (ibid., p. 56) explains the longevity of habitus:

*The habitus - embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history - is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.*

In other words, habitus is a set of internalised “rules of the game” that is firstly, accumulated across time and generations; secondly, specific to an entity with its unique histories; and thirdly, continue to project its influence onto past, present and future generations.

Reed-Danahay (2005, p. 156) notes that “[f]or Bourdieu we are each a habitus, a product of collective history, and not an autonomous individual.” Such a reading seems to suggest the continual power of habitus in structuring individual agency. However, because Bourdieu conceptualises habitus as a set of knowledge accumulated across time, this means that habitus is itself subject to change and modifications. As Setten (2009, p. 2) explains:

*Habitus is consequently not mere routine, it is improvisational and open to innovation. It has a mode of development through time, both individually and from one generation to the next. Habitus is thus a flexible and negotiable representation of oneself through practice adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation. It follows that habitus is relational and it is thus possible to state that habitus is individual, yet social; it is stable, but also dynamic; and it is action through time, being something we continually put into action when producing, constructing, and holding onto differing situations.*

Thus, habitus is fixed yet fluid – fixed in the sense of continual existence of unchanged concepts that are passed through generations; but at the same time fluid in the sense that individual interpretations of the concepts and adjustments of practices in accordance to circumstances are possible. In other words, habitus takes into account individualised and idiosyncratic responses that are more-or-less grounded in particular socio-cultural norms and rules.

In summary, habitus is a belief system of social norms providing the framework and rules for how an individual member of society acts and behaves. However, habitus does not mean rules, regulations or laws to be enforced. Habitus is contextually specific to a particular society, and is accumulated through history and time. Thus, habitus exists in continuity and exerts influence on present and future generations. However, habitus is fixed and fluid at the same time: fixed in terms of continual existence, yet fluid in terms of individual interpretations of the social norms.



### 2.4.2 Citizenship Habitus

Combining the notion of habitus with citizenship, I propose the concept of *citizenship habitus* to understand meanings, interpretations and practices of citizenship as a set of inherited dispositions and rules of conduct for people from the same place of origin. Citizenship habitus, as I use it, informs individual citizens and the collective citizenry as to how their citizenship is to be understood, practised and enacted in a particular context. Consequently, this habitus-informed understanding of citizenship continues to exert its influence on other citizenship statuses that the person may acquire through migration.

More specifically, I propose citizenship habitus as a postcolonial theoretical framework to be applied analytically in a post-colonial context. As I have explained in **Section 1.4**, a postcolonial approach to migration studies enables an interrogation of how colonial legacies work their way into post-colonial migration geographies and citizenship habitus. This approach provides a theoretical link between the historical and the contemporary, thereby raising questions to key migration concepts – in this case, citizenship – by paying attention to bottom-up understandings of migration and citizenship. Coining this postcolonial approach “citizenship habitus” is my deliberate move to highlight how “citizenship” has been differentially constituted, interpreted, experienced, and practised, in a non-Anglo-Western context that happens to also be one that is post-colonial and multi-ethnic. Since citizenship in Malaysia is *Bumiputera*-differentiated, this also raises questions about race/ethnicity and equality, which are pertinent questions for postcolonial geography.

One way to think about citizenship habitus is to look to social practice theories (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; de Certeau, 1984; Giddens, 1984). This approach sees migrants carrying practices from their origin contexts into their destination contexts. According to Reckwitz (2002, pp. 249-250), practices are

*... a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, ... etc. – forms ... a ‘block’ whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements.*

This means that practices are socialised cultures of knowing and behaving. In other words, practices are a form of background knowledge – habitus – that contains information about

how to act, how to think, how to feel, and how to understanding oneself in relation to the world. Furthermore (p.250),

*[t]he single individual – as a bodily and mental agent – then acts as the ‘carrier’ (Träger) of a practice – and, in fact, of many different practices which need not be coordinated with one another. Thus, she or he is not only a carrier of patterns of bodily behaviour, but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring. These conventionalized ‘mental’ activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual.*

In their contribution towards theorising diaspora remittance behaviour, Page and Mercer (2012) suggest adopting a communities of practice approach. This approach dispels the often taken-for-granted assumption that diasporas are motivated by economic and altruistic considerations in remitting. As they argue, diasporas

*... are not taught how to remit, but they learn to by doing so in a particular context. That learning process is not conscious, but it is illustrated by the routinized habits of remitting and an acceptance (sometimes reluctant) that such activities are right and should not be questioned.*

This suggests that knowledge and practices of remitting are acquired through a process of socialised routines. Through this process of socialised practices transferred from generations to generations, diasporas from a particular context learn that remitting is the expected and right way of behaving and acting. As a result, diasporas carry these embrained, embodied, encultured, embedded and encoded knowledge (Blacker, 2002) into their migration trajectories. Projecting this onto citizenship, one can then understand how and why migrants adopt, perform, and enact certain citizenship practices – which are informed by their citizenship habitus. This approach is particularly crucial in understanding citizenship “as a multifaceted practice” (Ronkainen, 2011, p. 261), especially for migrants who enjoy dual or multiple citizenship memberships.

## **2.5 Summary**

In summary, I have identified my theoretical positioning in *migration theories* in the first instance. I further draw upon three literature spheres to develop a theoretical framework relevant to this thesis: firstly, *postcolonialism and colonial legacies*; secondly, *citizenship, national identity and loyalty*; and thirdly, *habitus*. This arises from my criticism of existing migration theories. Firstly, there remains much to do to resolve difficulties in bridging macro-structural and micro-agency analyses. Hence, what is required is an approach examining the

interactions between the macro and the micro that revives the personal dimension (Antonsich, 2010), while not downplaying the structured dispositions of the individual migrant as a member of the collective society (see especially O'Reilly, 2012 on the “cycle of structuration”).

Secondly, there is a tendency to conceptualise migration according to categories (e.g. skilled migration) and isolated stages (e.g. emigration versus return). This obscures the cumulative and cross-generational translation of ideas and dispositions that could influence migration behaviour and practices. Thirdly, existing migration theories cannot fully account for multi-ethnic, post-colonial emigration contexts where notions of citizenship depart from that derived from Eurocentric experiences.

I draw from Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) concept of habitus, complemented by points I derive from literatures on postcolonialism and colonial legacies, and citizenship, national identity and loyalty. In my discussion of the literature on postcolonialism and colonial legacies, I highlight the longevity of colonial legacies – especially in immaterial forms – which find remnants in post-colonial societies. In regards to migration, this is especially significant in circumscribing the meanings, interpretations and practices of citizenship vis-à-vis national identity and loyalty. This socialised disposition towards citizenship – what I call citizenship habitus – continues to influence citizenship and migration practices amongst contemporary migrants in the post-colonial period.

Thus, citizenship habitus provides a postcolonial approach in understanding and explaining contemporary migration phenomena by firstly, linking the historical with the present; and secondly, focusing on the interactions between the macro with the micro. Specifically, it takes into account the significance of colonial legacies in institutionalising structures pertaining to race/ethnicity, education and citizenship/nationality; the agency and influences of the post-colonial state in exacerbating these factors during the post-colonial period; as well as the agency of migrants as social actors positioned in the related macro-structures.

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

This chapter outlines my motivations for this research. I begin in **Section 3.1** with my migration journey to contextualise my positionality, which has implications for the research design, methodological considerations and fieldwork issues I encountered in the research process. **Section 3.2** discusses how I translated my personal motivations and questions into academic research terms, and how this is operationalised through research design. **Section 3.3** examines data sources and related research issues. **Section 3.4** discusses data analysis, especially how I integrated the collated data corpus to make sense of what they meant altogether. Attention is given to my fieldwork experiences, since this research is multi-sited and draws from my research migration journey. Finally, **Section 3.5** concludes this chapter.

### **3.1 My Migration Journey**

#### **3.1.1 A Personal Narrative**

I grew up in Kota Bharu, a town close to the Malaysia-Thailand border on the East Coast of Peninsula Malaysia. I spent the first twelve years of my life there, growing up amongst large extended family on both sides of my parents. When I started Standard Six (i.e. sixth year of primary school), we moved to Kuantan, a larger East Coast town in Peninsula Malaysia because of my father's job transfer. I spent five years there and completed my *Penilaian Menengah Rendah* (PMR), a national lower secondary school exam. Following my father's encouragements, I successfully applied for the ASEAN Scholarship administered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Singapore. At age 16, I embarked on my migration trajectory, without knowing at the onset how far my travels would turn out to be.

I remember my first trip to Singapore. It was raining, and I sat in the car looking out at clean streets lined with greenery. Buildings were orderly placed, people walked across overhead bridges – life seemed normal and not that different from what I was accustomed to in small town Malaysia. When we arrived at the student hostel that was to be my home for the next four years, I was excited to begin my life away from home. It felt like a fun-filled summer camp, living with friends who came to Singapore through the same means as I did.

In hindsight, I had conceptualised this as a *temporary excursion* – my home would continue to be Malaysia, period. This was reinforced by my repeated visits back home. Every school holiday, I had to pack my belongings into the hostel store room and make my journey home on a seven-hour coach ride. Every Chinese New Year, my father would make the five-hour drive from Kuantan back to our hometown. I cherished these return visits, because it meant reconnecting with familiar landscapes, sounds and smells that were unique to a place I call my hometown. These were also opportunities to meet and catch up with my cousins, uncles, aunties, and grandparents. It was like reliving our nostalgic childhoods over and over again.

Life as a foreign student in one of the most prestigious all girls' secondary schools in Singapore was different from what I had experienced previously in Malaysia. I had been educated in Mandarin for six years in a national-type primary school (see **Section 5.2.3**), and in Malay for four years in secondary school. In Singapore, I had to switch to English. Malaysian school uniforms were standardised throughout the country, while each Singapore school had its own uniform. In Malaysia all the public schools looked almost the same – similar architectural styles and materials rendered in the typical brown and beige colour scheme. In my Singapore school, buildings were of a dark green and salmon red colour scheme. Classrooms and science labs were modern and well-equipped. Even the tables were different – in Singapore they were made of plastic with desk tops that could be lifted up to lock books below, while in Malaysia they were wooden desks with an open shelf below the desk top.

My fellow Singaporean classmates were friendly to me, yet I knew I could never become one of them. Most of them had known each other since Secondary One, and I had lost out on being part of that network because I joined in Secondary Three. During morning assemblies they would sing the Singapore national anthem and recite the national pledge. I would always stand still, adamant not to sing and recite along. Deep down inside I always knew I was different, although I could never articulate this difference I so keenly felt. There was always an invisible barrier I could never cross – but perhaps it was also a barrier I had subconsciously created between myself and “them”.

After completing my GCE ‘O’ Levels, I went along with my peers and applied to junior colleges. After completing my GCE ‘A’ Levels two years later, I again went along with my peers and applied to universities in Singapore, and scholarships offered by various public sector organisations. I obtained a company-sponsored scholarship for my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, which came with a four-year bond after graduation. I gladly took up the scholarship, happy to know that I could save money for my parents. I remember feeling a

sense of accomplishment because I had done the “right” thing and made my parents proud. Little did I know that taking up the scholarship would materialise into an extended stay in Singapore.

During my Master of Architecture degree, I went for a one-year exchange to the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I had British, Greek, Turkish, Chinese, Korean, Seychelles and Singaporean friends. It was this year abroad that made me think about questions of identity and nationality. This curiosity eventually translated into my final year design thesis – a transcultural exchange hub – investigating issues of ethnic and cultural hybridisation, integration and assimilation in Singapore’s multi-ethnic context.

After graduation, I started work with my scholarship sponsor company. As I am a foreigner in Singapore, I was issued an Employment Pass (EP). Some of my fellow Malaysian friends took up Singapore permanent residence (SPR) status immediately, but I didn’t do that until nine months into work. Why didn’t I readily take up SPR? I remember rationalising that I wasn’t sure how long I was going to stay in Singapore. The idea of taking a *permanent* status seemed to me a kind of irreversible act – like making the final decision to cross the bridge, and no longer having one foot in Singapore and one foot in Malaysia. Perhaps in my young mind then, there was a sense that this would have been an act of betrayal to my country. If memories are “constantly made and remade as people try to make sense of the past” (Agnew, 2005, p. 9), perhaps mine have tricked me into believing this now.

Time passed quickly as work accumulated and overwhelmed. Counting down to the day of my contractual freedom, I started revisiting my dream of pursuing a PhD. The questions that had intrigued me previously – identity and belonging; ethnicity and nationality; “us” and “them” – continued to reside at the back of my mind, biding their time to resurface. It was time to leave my comfortable but mundane professional life in Singapore, to embark on a journey of intellectual and personal discovery. My questions needed answering – what best way to do so than to begin another migration journey?

Thus, I became a student migrant and ended up in London. In hindsight, I realised I had never really questioned why I continued to prefer the UK to other destinations for my further studies. Whenever I was asked this question, I would always say that the longer PhD tenure and cumbersome application process in the US deterred me from putting in an application. However, could this also have been a result of my habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) – being socialised into preferring the UK because of the colonial link?

Studying in one of the most international social sciences universities in London gave me lots to ponder about my taken-for-granted beliefs and epistemology. I recall an incident during one of the research methods seminars. We were asked to discuss the question: “Are you a Londoner?” I was taken aback at my own response – “No, of course not!” I thought to myself: “I am Malaysian, how can I ever be a Londoner?” To my surprise, some students who had only been in London for a few months felt that they were Londoners because they lived in the city and appreciated its culture. They identified themselves as Londoners because they embodied and celebrated London’s openness and diversity.

I was intrigued: *Is it possible for me to become anything other than a Malaysian? Why is it that I hold this idea of “being Malaysian” so dearly? Am I the only one with such inclination? What does it mean for Malaysia when her people have this strong sense of belonging and loyalty? How did it come about, and why?*

### **3.1.2 A Malaysian “Diaspora”?**

Parallel to my personal questions, I was also aware of Malaysia’s brain drain issue. As I mentioned in **Chapter 1**, I grew up hearing stories of Malaysians who had left for overseas studies or emigrated, and have met other mobile Malaysians as part of my personal migration trajectory. Following the Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak’s announcement of the New Economic Model (NEM) in 2010, the establishment of Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (TalentCorp) in January 2011, and the release of The World Bank (2011) report, the issue of Malaysia’s brain drain gained media attention. However, there is often uncritical use of the term “diaspora”. For example, Malaysia’s Deputy Prime Minister has called the “Malaysian diaspora” an “asset” which the country seeks to “cooperate with and hopefully entice to return in the near future” (*Bernama*, 2011). However, specific eligibility criteria meant that only professionals with corresponding years of working experience in selected industries could qualify for Returning Expert Programme (REP). This meant that it is not enough for an overseas Malaysian to hold Malaysian citizenship in order to be recognised officially as a member of the “Malaysian diaspora”.<sup>10</sup>

During my Masters degree, I took a course on diaspora and development. I learnt the origin of the term “diaspora” and why it became so contested. Three characteristics of a diaspora particularly intrigued and confused me as I tried to relate them to Malaysia’s case: firstly,

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<sup>10</sup> I develop this argument in an article currently under review as part of a special issue on migration-as-development (Koh, under review).

members of a diaspora were forced to leave their place of origin; secondly, they continue to nurture yearnings for their homeland; and thirdly, some actively engaged in remittances and homeland development projects. I read about Chinese-Malaysians being “the second wave diaspora” (Cartier, 2003, p. 92),<sup>11</sup> partly attributed to pro-*Bumiputera* policies. Thus, they were arguably “forced” to leave.<sup>12</sup> However, most continue to consider themselves Malaysians, and Malaysia as “home” (Lam & Yeoh, 2004). Although some feel strongly about retaining their Malaysian citizenship and harbour an “imagined return” (Long & Oxfeld, 2004), many have not actually done so. Furthermore, contributing towards “homeland” development – an assumed norm in the diaspora literature – is not a common practice amongst the Malaysian diaspora.

In the early stages of conceptualising my Masters dissertation, I wanted to examine the question “Are Chinese-Malaysians transnational migrants, diasporas or sojourners?”, but was discouraged from doing so as my supervisor was not convinced it was a question worth asking. I eventually developed a different research focus, but this initial question remained buried in my mind. Instinctively, I knew that Malaysia’s case would not fit neatly into existing knowledge boundaries. Yet I was ill-equipped to examine and communicate how it was different, and what significance this would bring to social science knowledge in general.

*I wondered: Who are the real “Malaysian diaspora”? If Malaysia is interested in attracting and retaining its overseas population, what are the existing barriers and how can they be resolved? How can the strong sense of emotional affiliation/belonging to Malaysia amongst the Malaysian diaspora be channelled towards a win-win solution for all stakeholders involved? What does Malaysia’s case tell us about migration, sojourn, diaspora and development?*

## **3.2 Research Design**

### **3.2.1 Translating Motivations into Academic Terms**

This thesis thus originated from my search for a way to link three apparently disconnected aspects surrounding Malaysia’s migration phenomena: first, my personal migration experience; second, my concern for Malaysia’s emigration and brain drain; and third, my confusion about how Malaysia’s case can fit into existing migration studies literature and concepts such as

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<sup>11</sup> The first wave being the diaspora from China.

<sup>12</sup> My use of the term “forced” to describe mobile Malaysians serves to complicate simplified understandings of forced versus voluntary migration. My intention is not in any way to reify dichotomies in migration studies (King, 2012, Table 2), but instead to challenge migration scholars to be more careful in their terminologies, as these have material consequences (e.g. in translation into policy terminology and everyday usage with real impacts upon migrating persons).



citizenship. These questions were seeded before I officially embarked upon this research project. The questions gestated and developed alongside my life experiences – as a Malaysian citizen, a migrant/PR in Singapore, an international student in London, and an academic-to-be. Before arriving at my thesis presented here, I went through many iterations in designing and framing what it was – in academic terms – that I was researching (**Appendix A2**). The core of my research enquiry remained constant throughout this research journey: citizenship – in terms of meanings and practices – from the perspectives of mobile Malaysians. What I was searching for was a suitable combination of theoretical literature within which to position my enquiry. During the first year of my PhD studies before commencing fieldwork, I explored literature on citizenship, diaspora, skilled migration, emotional geography, as well as a quick detour into neoliberalism. In hindsight, I was searching for theories to help me explain why mobile Malaysians practise certain citizenship and migration practices. Before going to the field in September 2011, I thought that my research was about mobile Malaysians' emotional attachment to their Malaysian citizenship (e.g. loyalty, trust, fear, belonging, etc.). Thus, I looked to the literature on emotional geography and framed the research accordingly.

When I went to the field in September 2011, I had a fair idea that I was going to recruit and interview tertiary-educated, professional Malaysians to understand their migration trajectories, and their citizenship and migration decisions. However, after I returned to London from the field in January 2012, I noticed a shift in the way I framed the research. I wrote about a “culture of migration” amongst mobile Malaysians, especially for the purpose of education. By the time I started planning my thesis outline in May 2012, I emphasised the idea of “migration as learning”, in reference to how mobile Malaysians learn about being Malaysian through their migration processes. Issues of emotions attached to citizenship continue to remain relevant, although my focus shifted towards using the migration process as an explanation for mobile Malaysians' changing dispositions about being Malaysian.

It was not until December 2012 when I started coining the term “citizenship habitus”, inspired by Bourdieu's notion of habitus, to convey the idea of a system of inherited dispositions in particular relation to citizenship meanings and practices. The concept of habitus enabled me to explain why mobile Malaysians adopt certain citizenship strategies and practices by linking their behaviours to the historicity of Malaysian citizenship. As my writing evolved and became more precise, I realised the need to gain a deeper understanding of colonial and post-colonial Malaysian histories. The concept of citizenship habitus allowed me to engage analytically with the past, in the form of citizenship constitution and nation-building in Malaya and Malaysia; and the present, in the form of contemporary migration phenomena.

While there has been an evolution in terms of the specific academic literature I chose to position this research, the core question remained constant. The different theories and concepts assisted my understanding of this research, but they also posed limitations at certain times. For example, the emotional geography literature enabled me to deconstruct the different emotions mobile Malaysians attach to their Malaysian citizenship, yet emotions alone could not convey the complete story. The neoliberalism literature enabled me to explain why mobile Malaysians practice what appears to be flexible citizenship strategies, yet this approach prioritised the contemporary and limited me from weaving in the history of citizenship which I came to realise is a significant explanatory factor.

The final framing of this research – an examination of the longevity of colonial legacies through mobile Malaysians’ culture of migration and citizenship habitus – may not be *the* definitive version of mobile Malaysians’ migration stories. Nevertheless, I believe it is an account that is significant and can offer insights to advance our understanding of migration behaviour, the relationship between history and geography, as well as the longevity of colonialism.

### **3.2.2 My Positionality Matters**

In this study, I argue that my personal transnational migration journey and positionality is crucial to the formulation, development, implementation and interpretation of the research. Part of my motivations for this research lies in my own citizenship and migration trajectory as a mobile Malaysian who has traversed Singapore and London. Thus, this research is as much about the respondents as it is about my personal journey of emotional knowing – which is in turn an examination of the longevity of British colonial legacies in the form of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus. Similar to my respondents, I have experienced being a Malaysian citizen, a Singapore PR, and a Malaysian migrant in London. I agree fully with Liu’s (forthcoming, p. 4) perspective:

*By combining my personal story, empirical findings and scholarly literature sources, I was able to better reflect the very subjective, complex and rich understanding of what it means to be a transnational migrant, while at the same time illuminating something of transnational experience.*

Over the last three decades or so, there has been a turn towards embracing researcher positionality in social science, especially in studies employing qualitative research methods. Proponents for autobiographical and autoethnographic approaches have argued for the strengths of these approaches, including facilitating data collation and access to “insider

meanings” (L. Anderson, 2006), and offering opportunities for reflection for both researcher and participant(s) (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993). On the other hand, while acknowledging the methodological and theoretical advantages of these approaches, others have also highlighted areas of concern, including issues of research ethics, maintaining distance, objectivity and validity (Gemignani, 2011; Harrison & Lyon, 1993; Maydell, 2010; Voloder, 2008). To this end, Butz and Besio (2009, p. 1671) propose an “autoethnographic sensibility” for geographers that includes careful awareness of firstly, the inevitable embedding of researchers as part of their research; secondly, research subjects “are autoethnographers in their own right”; and thirdly, the continual interaction between the researcher and research subjects’ narratives and interests.

Recent developments in the migration literature include studies employing the researcher’s positionality as insider/outsider migrant-researcher (Ngan, 2008; Pong, 2012); studies highlighting how the researcher discovers the self in relation to migration research (Han, 2009); studies exploring the reflexive relationship between the researcher and the researched (Ganga & Scott, 2006; Wang, 2006); studies highlighting the “outsider” position of the researcher despite being an “insider”, and how this impacts on data collection and interpretation (Chaudhry, 1997); and the implications of minority migrant/researcher positionality on the research process (De Tona, 2006; Kim, 2012).

Bondi (2005, p. 243) argues that “reflecting on the rich and diverse qualities of researchers’ emotional responses to fieldwork experiences may be important to our continuing capacity to conduct fieldwork, to interact sensitively with research participants, and to develop rich understandings of what is it we do.” Indeed, the “positioning and location of the researcher, the technical practice of research, the object of study, the academic and the political, the reflexive and emotional are all questions of relationality” (Gray, 2008, p. 949).

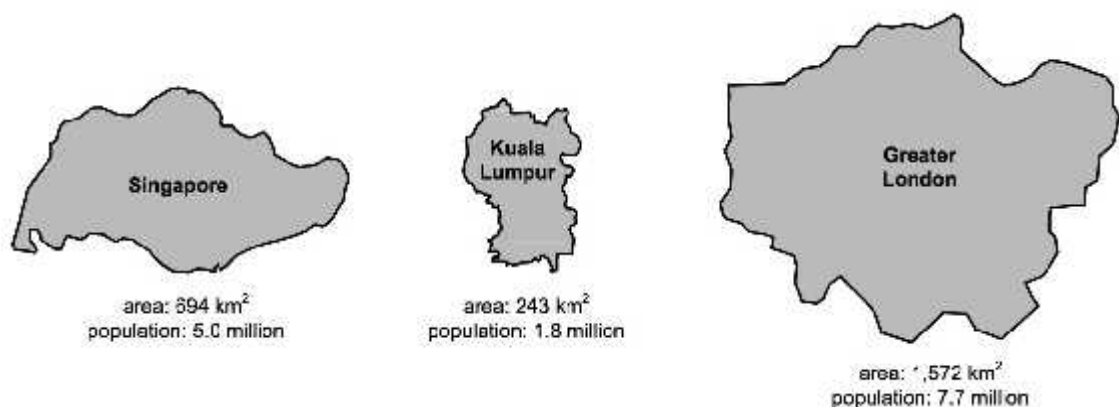
It is this relationality that I seek in this research – what it means to be a mobile Malaysian in this milieu; and what it means to be a mobile Malaysian researching this question at this point in my life. As Rose (1997, p. 316) puts it, “we are made through our research as much as we make our own knowledge, and ... this process is complex, uncertain and incomplete.” In this context, I take on feminist geography’s arguments for situated knowledge and positionality (Haraway, 1988) and argue that as researchers, we can never be fully objective in any part of the research process. Objectivity, as Bourdieu (1990, p. 20) argues, is achieved by bringing “the native who is in every outside observer” closer to the observer. By blurring the divide between

native/insider and researcher/outsider, I hope that my “subjective” positionality will bring a “nuanced objectivity” to this research.

### 3.2.3 Migration as Methodology

In line with my situated approach, I chose to emulate a transnational research migration process for this research. This is informed by Marcus’ (1995) classic suggestion to “follow the people”. My fieldwork sites are Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur (KL) (**Figure 3.1**). This decision was based on two methodological and practical considerations. First, Malaysia and Singapore are “umbilically-linked” (Lam & Yeoh, 2004, p. 142) in many ways, including sharing a common British colonial history and nation-building phase. Legacies of the British colonial administration have also contributed to the institutionalisation of citizenship in both Malaysia and Singapore. Similarly, contemporary migration between Malaysia, Singapore and the UK can be traced to the historical and geographical ties between the three states. These offer opportunities to investigate how “historical precedents and overlays in a particular place shape migrants’ experiences and actions” (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 144). In the Malaysian and Singaporean contexts, citizenship institutionalised through colonial and post-colonial eras resulted in citizenship as understood and practised in both official and everyday life. This in turn circumscribes individual citizenship and migration trajectories. Thus, a multi-sited fieldwork approach enables the comparisons of *whether*, and *how* Malaysia’s citizenship habitus plays out in the respective field sites.

**Figure 3.1: Fieldwork Sites**



Source: Author

Choosing Singapore is also an obvious decision as it hosts the largest overseas Malaysian population. The second and third largest host countries, Australia and the USA, were not

chosen for two practical considerations. Firstly, I wanted to include comparisons of physical proximity, and Australia is relatively close to Malaysia and Singapore compared to the UK. Secondly, I am based in London and have a better understanding of this context compared to Australia and the USA. More importantly, I chose the UK for its colonial linkages to Malaysia, which is a significant factor to examine Malaysia's citizenship habitus and culture of migration. The third site, KL, has recently been designated as a key development area in line with Malaysia's plan to achieve a high-income country status by 2020. KL's development potential, contrasted with Singapore and London's increasingly saturated development, higher costs of living and the relative attractiveness of immigration/emigration policies (see **Section 6.2**), present an excellent opportunity to study how mobile Malaysians consider their return and/or remigration plans.

Second, a multi-sited fieldwork approach offers a "transnational migration" opportunity as part of my research journey. As this research is reflexive and draws from my positionality as insider *and* outsider, emulating the transnational migration experience as I move transnationally across the three fieldwork sites is crucial. These transnational migration movements offer opportunities for me to think reflexively in the shoes of the mobile Malaysian. These experiences are captured in my research diary, which has been crucial to this research.

During fieldwork, I had to make a few adjustments to the definition of the three fieldwork sites. Firstly, I expanded "London" to include major UK cities where my respondents resided. Secondly, I included other major cities in Malaysia to which some of my returnee-respondents "returned". This includes Johor Bahru (JB), Malaysia's second largest city at the Malaysia-Singapore border. Thirdly, through my research blog (**Section 2.3.3**), I encountered some mobile Malaysians residing in other global locations. I decided to include them in my research as their perspectives provided useful and appropriate insights.

### **3.3 Data Sources and Research Issues**

Data for this research is collated from four key sources: archival documents, interview-conversations with mobile Malaysians in the three field sites, my research blog, and my research diary. These are complemented by other sources such as social and online media, official documents, and statistical data. Archival documents are primarily referred to in **Chapters 4-5**, while interview data are primarily used in **Chapters 7-8**. In the following sub-

sections, I describe the data collection and research issues associated with the respective sources.

### **3.3.1 Archival Documents and Situated Histories**

In order to understand how Malaysia's citizenship habitus and culture of migration came about, I collected and analysed archival documents. I conducted archival research in two stages: August 2011 to January 2012; and March to May 2013. In the first stage, I employed a specific search strategy by focusing only on documents relating to "citizenship" and "nation-building" during colonial and post-colonial Malaysia and Singapore. I visited the National Archives in London (TNA), the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Library and the National Archives of Singapore, as well as the National Archives of Malaysia in KL. These were supplemented by secondary sources on Malaysia and Singapore histories in the Singapore/Malaysia collection at the National University of Singapore (NUS), the British Library, the British Library of Political and Economic Science, and the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library in Singapore.

While the first stage of archival research coincided with my fieldwork in Singapore and KL, I embarked on the second stage only after I had completed in-depth interviews, commenced initial data analysis and started writing-up. This occurred for two reasons. First, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) announced that its previously withheld colonial administration records, known as the "migrated archives", would be released to the public from April 2012 onwards. Records on Malaya were released in April 2012, while those on Singapore were released in April 2013.<sup>13</sup> My second stage of archival research aimed to consult these newly-released documents to see if they could shed light on this research.

Second, after conducting preliminary analysis and while writing-up, I found that my previous search strategy of focusing only on "citizenship" and "nation-building" had been too limiting. Thus, during the second stage of archival research, I consulted files relating to education, the Malayan Emergency, intelligence, electoral voting, etc. (**Appendix A3**). Reading these archival documents in parallel with published academic books and articles on colonial Malayan history gave me a broader, nuanced, and critical understanding of Malaysia's history vis-à-vis what I had learned through the Malaysian education system.

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<sup>13</sup> A second batch of Singapore files was released on 27 September 2013. A third batch will be released in November 2013.

However, it is important to note that archival documents present a situated history, depending on the perspectives of the document creator, the archival policy and resources, as well as the relative importance placed upon archival practice. Furthermore, as Scott (1990, p. 25) cautions:

*we have also to consider deliberate destruction or removal when documents are regarded as 'sensitive' or of particular importance. Official papers are subject to 'weeding' within their originating departments, a process in which the weeders are required to decide not only which documents are likely to be of value to historians but also whether any are too politically sensitive to be released into a public archive ...*

This is particularly relevant as British colonial administration records originally located in the respective colonies have either been destroyed, “migrated” (i.e. transferred by request to the UK when the colonies gained independence), or concealed from the public (see Banton, 2012; *The Guardian*, 2012a).

In conducting archival research, I came across documents written from the perspective of the British colonial administration, as these are relatively well-documented in TNA. On the other hand, the Malayan perspective was comparatively silent. This could also be an outcome of me not having spent as much time combing through the National Archives in KL and the various state archives in other parts of Malaysia. In my defence, however, my research started off focusing on in-depth interviews as my main data source. Archival research was *only* used to provide the contextual landscape within which to position these personal migration narratives. In other words, I used archive documents as “resources” (i.e. what they tell me about historical events and the making of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus) and not “topics” of research enquiry of the documents themselves (see Scott, 1990, pp. 36-37). Thus, I was concerned with gaining a general idea of the socio-political atmosphere from 1820s to 1960s, and not a specific historiography of that period.

### **3.3.2 Interview Conversations: Recruitment and Ethical Considerations**

Initially I designed the research to include 50-60 interviews, with an average of 15-20 for each fieldwork site. During fieldwork, I encountered 67 mobile Malaysians (**Appendix A4**) – 16 in London/UK, 27 in Singapore, six in other global locations, and 18 returnees. In this thesis, I refer to individual respondents by their current location (**L** for London/UK; **S** for Singapore; **M** for returnees; and **G** for other global locations), followed by a running number.

In line with the biographical approach to migration (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993), I designed interview questions that “enquire around” respondents’ reflections of their citizenship and migration trajectories. This is to construct a “multi-layered, biographical and complex” (Ní

Laoire, 2000, p. 241) understanding of rich migration narratives. While I designed an interview guide (**Appendix A5**), actual interviews were more open-ended, allowing respondents to talk freely about issues that were important to them. Furthermore, I saw these interviews as opportunities for each respondent and myself to reflect together during our shared conversations.

I recruited respondents based on the following criteria.

- a) *Tertiary-educated*: I was concerned with Malaysia's brain drain and decided to limit myself to skilled migrants. In general, migrants are considered skilled when they have at least tertiary education or its equivalent (see Koser & Salt, 1997, p. 287). Furthermore, overseas education is a significant component of the culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians.
- b) *Aged between 25 to 50*: This targets mobile Malaysians who are typically first or second generation migrants in Singapore and the UK, and third generation in Malaysia. Thus, they were either born and raised in Malaysia, or born and raised in Singapore or the UK. Respondents within this age group also include young parents and/or mid-career professionals who may be seriously contemplating citizenship and migration decisions.<sup>14</sup>
- c) *Durations of stays in current site*: I imposed minimum residential years in the respective field sites: five years in London/UK; two years in Singapore; or one year in KL. The five-year criterion for London/UK was adopted since applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) requires a minimum five-year UK work visa. The two-year criterion for Singapore was adopted as this would have covered two groups of respondents: first, those who had settled since the pro-immigration 1990s; and second, those who were subjected to stricter immigration and citizenship politics from 2009 onwards. A shorter timeframe is adopted for KL to focus on recent returnees for two push/pull factors: first, the less favourable exchange rate between the British Pound and the Malaysian Ringgit (**Figure 3.2**); and second, Malaysia's recent return migration policies re-introduced in 2011.

My earlier work on Malaysian-Chinese skilled migrants in Singapore (Koh, 2010) suggested that durations of stays in the diaspora do not directly influence intentions to

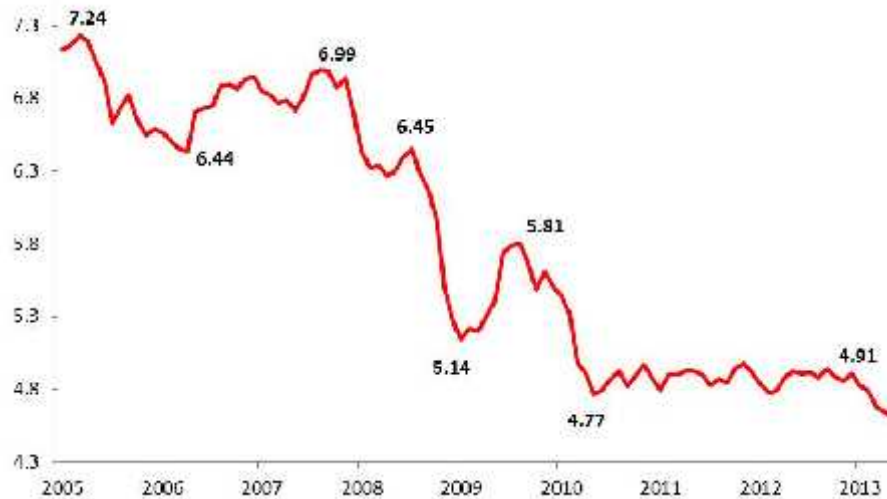
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<sup>14</sup> During fieldwork, I encountered and included four respondents who were more than 50 years of age as I found their perspectives useful to this research.



return. Rather, this was also dependent upon individual degrees of attachment to “home” (associated with “family”, “here”, or “there”), which could be correlated to the age at the point of emigration from Malaysia. Indeed, this is significant in understanding mobile Malaysians’ dispositions towards “Malaysia”, as I will explain in **Part III** of this thesis.

**Figure 3.2: British Pound to Malaysian Ringgit, January 2005-May 2013**



Source: OANDA (2013)

- d) *Citizenship and PR status*: To examine mobile Malaysians’ dispositions towards citizenship, I included Malaysians and ex-Malaysians. I focused on the considerations and experiences in their citizenship and PR decisions (e.g. whether it was purposeful or unquestioned retention or change of citizenship).
- e) *Migrated at least once*: This is to understand the culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians and how migration trajectories specifically took place. This allows a comparative examination of their past and present citizenship and migration practices, as well as their future migration prospects.

Respondents were recruited through snowball sampling via personal contacts (including contacts made at the Malaysian Talent and Diaspora Conference in London, October 2010), associations (e.g. Malaysian student societies) and online communities (e.g. The UK Expat Malaysians Meetup Group). I asked for referrals through respondents from my earlier work on tertiary-educated Malaysian-Chinese in Singapore. I also used my research blog for recruitment (see **Section 3.3.3**).

As discussions pertaining to citizenship can be sensitive in Malaysia and Singapore (see **Part II**), I ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality to protect respondents' identities. This was also to address anticipated difficulties in obtaining participation consent from respondents. On the one hand, my identity assisted in building rapport and gaining trust with my respondents. In addition, my personal migration experiences offered proximity and a common connection with my respondents. On the other hand, my identity also brought limitations to the research. Firstly, my own preconceived ideas, assumptions and similar experiences may introduce bias to the research in terms of recruitment and data analysis. Secondly, respondents could leave some things unsaid if they assumed I was an "insider" who would "understand" the implicitly unarticulated. To mitigate this, I always asked my respondents to elaborate further, or to clarify what they meant.

### **3.3.3 Research Blog, Recruitment and Representativeness**

When I first entered the field, I started recruiting from referrals through my personal networks, which slowly gained speed and breadth as fieldwork progressed. To expand my recruitment reach beyond my immediate social network, I set up a research blog ([www.movingmalaysians.wordpress.com](http://www.movingmalaysians.wordpress.com)) with relevant background information for prospective respondents. While my original intention was to use the blog to recruit respondents, it has since developed into a repository for resources; a space to organise my thoughts and reflections; and a networking platform to connect with other scholars and Malaysians sharing the same empirical concern. Out of the total 67 respondents, 15 were recruited either directly, or indirectly, through my blog.

In the recruitment process, I provided an explanation of my research project, including my motivations and preliminary questions. I kept the following statement on the homepage, as well as on the "Motivation" page:

*I am one of you. Like you, I am also trying to figure out my views about the country I was born in, about whether I will return, about the very real and contradictory considerations each of us have to grapple with in our citizenship and mobility decisions. This project is a quest for answers.*

In putting this statement on my research blog, I am aware that I am playing into my positionality as an insider, and to construct a sense of belonging to an imagined community (B. Anderson, 2006). This had been effective in attracting respondents who either chanced upon

my blog, or were introduced through another common contact. For example, **L04** who agreed to participate after visiting my blog said:

I have read your blog on the project and believe that all you have said really hold true ... and we struggle everyday with the loyalty issue to “Malaysia” and Malaysian-ness.

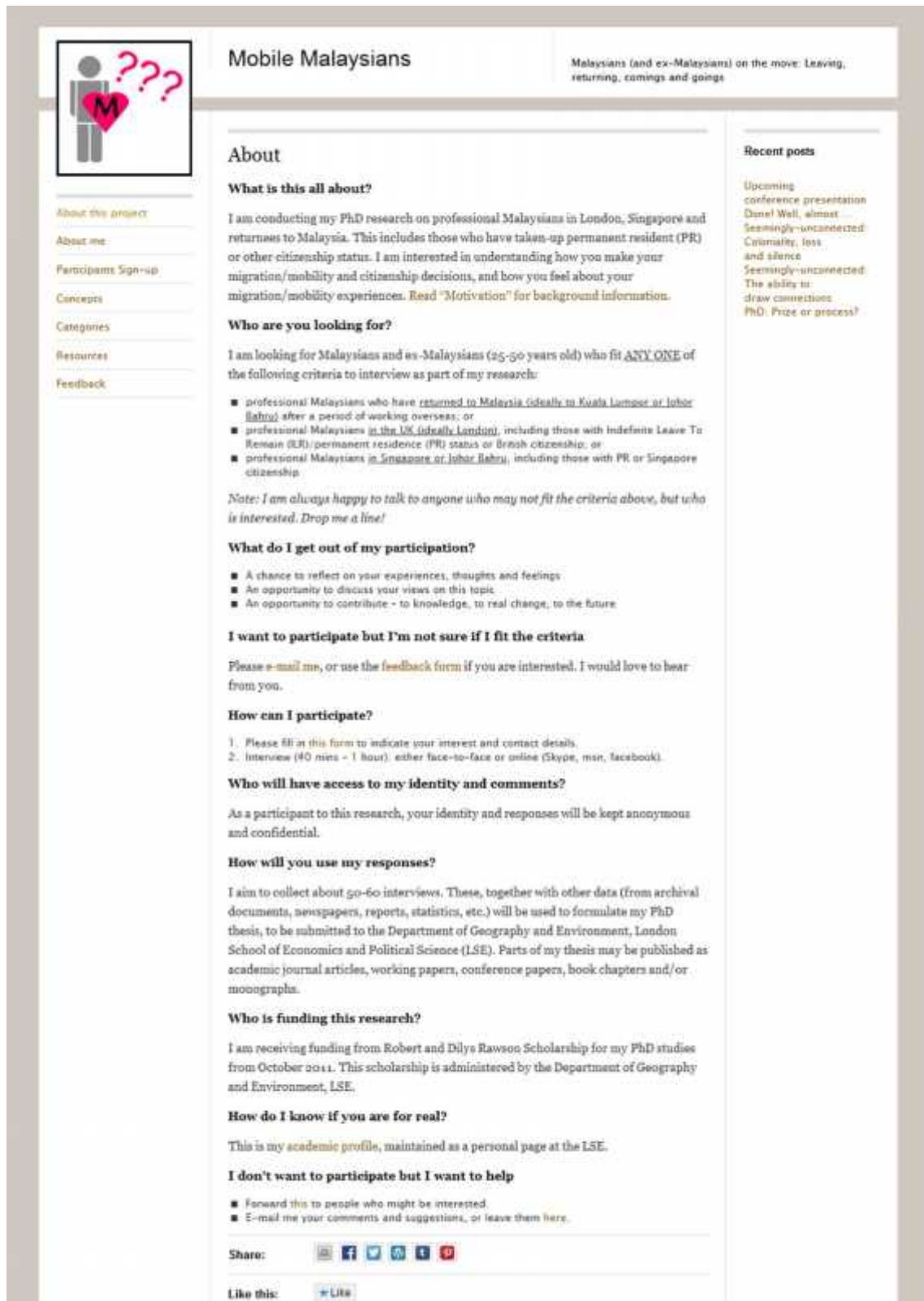
In other words, my research blog provided a public front in helping me publicise and explain my research and recruitment matters. This includes the selection criteria, ethical issues, funding source, etc. (**Figure 3.3; Appendix A5**).

While my blog was successful in terms of publicity and recruitment, I am also aware that it could have produced representative bias in my respondent sample. Firstly, my blog is limited in terms of reach: only readers with access to my blog would be able to read it. Secondly, perhaps readers who resonated with my research project would be more willing to come forth as interview respondents. Thirdly, as my blog was written in English, this could have excluded respondents who are more comfortable with other languages such as Malay, Mandarin and Tamil.

As a fellow-Malaysian, I found it much easier to gain access and build rapport with my respondents. Complete strangers would agree to being interviewed because I am Malaysian and/or because I was referred to by a mutual contact. This explains why most of my respondents were Chinese, although I did manage to interview a handful of *Bumiputera*-Malays and people of mixed ethnicities. Prior to leaving for fieldwork in Singapore, a contact had tried to introduce me to some *Bumiputera*-Malays in London. I also met a few *Bumiputera*-Malays during the London *Hari Raya* (or Eid, as it is known in the UK) open houses in September 2011. Unfortunately, they either remained unresponsive, or turned unresponsive after initially agreeing to participate. One reason could be because I am not *Bumiputera*-Malay: perhaps I could have gained more ground had I been one. Another possible explanation is that some *Bumiputera*-Malays in London were government scholarship holders, a group frequently warned by their scholarship sponsor ministries to refrain from engaging in any activities that could jeopardise their scholarships (see **Section 5.2.2**).

Being perceived as “one of us” makes it easier for me to connect with, and understand the narratives and some things that were left unsaid or unexplained. Respondents felt at ease with me, and often shared their views and perspectives in an unreserved manner. There were also occasions when I felt strong connections with their world views and perspectives. Sometimes I felt affirmation and support for the research project, and this was important to keep me going

Figure 3.3: Screen Shot of “About” Page



Note: Full text available in **Appendix A5**.

Source: Author

especially during times of self-doubt. However, the perception that I was “one of us” could have also led some respondents to leave things unsaid by assuming that I would understand. Surprisingly, I found this to be more so during face-to-face interviews rather than online Skype interviews. During Skype interviews, respondents would take time to explain things that they perhaps thought I wasn’t aware of, but which in fact I knew quite well.

In hindsight, the apparently “skewed” composition of my respondents’ ethnicity and education-pathways suggest a correlation to my thesis argument. Out of 67 respondents, five are *Bumiputeras* (four *Bumiputera*-Malays and one *Bumiputera*-Eurasian), with the majority being non-*Bumiputera* Chinese (92.5%). While this may appear to be a biased representation of mobile Malaysians in the three field sites, I argue that closer scrutiny is required. Firstly, the ages and reasons at first emigration differed amongst my Chinese respondents. Secondly, they held various compositions of other citizenships and PR statuses. Both observations similarly apply to my *Bumiputera* respondents.

Thirdly, and most importantly, not all of my Chinese respondents came from the same education stream (see **Chapter 7**). At the primary school stage, they represented students from national schools, national-type schools, Chinese independent schools, international schools, as well as early student-migrants to Singapore. At the pre-university and university levels, they represented students from private colleges and universities, public universities, and overseas universities. I argue that the positive recruitment response I received from Chinese respondents, and the simultaneous lack of response from *Bumiputera* respondents, is precisely the outcome of Malaysia’s education system inherited and evolved from British colonial legacies.

In other words, the stratification of Malaysians into various education streams produced mobile Malaysians with certain affinities and social networks, which translated to how my respondents eventually came into contact with me. This is also a demonstration of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus at work: Chinese respondents trusted me (or our common social contact) and came forward, while *Bumiputeras* stayed away, perhaps due to the inevitable racial divide seeded by the British colonial administration, and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state.

### **3.3.4 Research Diary**

I kept a research diary to document my thoughts and reflections throughout the research process. My research diary consists of my research blog posts and an offline diary. I made sure to write down my thoughts after each series of interviews. I also recorded my observations and reflections as I moved between fieldwork sites. My experiences as a researcher in the field, as well as a “returnee” to the three sites – albeit in different capacities – were instrumental in producing insights in developing my understanding of this research. This also came to influence how I interpreted and analysed the collected data, as I will discuss in **Section 3.4**.

### **3.3.5 Official Documents and Statistical Data**

For contemporary official documents, I looked at selected government policy documents (e.g. Malaysia’s NEM Report; TalentCorp press releases and reports), speeches (e.g. Singapore’s parliament speech on differentiations between citizens and PRs) and news articles (e.g. UK’s proposed changes to immigration policies) to track changes in government discourse on citizenship and immigration policies. I focused on two periods – 1990 to 2000, and 2000 to the present – to compare and analyse shifts in government discourse. The first period is associated with a generally “immigration-friendly” attitude in Singapore and the UK, while the second period is associated with a growing sense of “immigration anxiety” in all three sites.

Statistical data on citizenship and migration in Malaysia, Singapore and the UK are collected through the respective national statistics bodies. These include the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Department of Statistics Singapore (DOSS), the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS), etc. I also requested non-publicly released statistics from the relevant agencies where appropriate. These data provide the macro-perspective of migration and citizenship trends to contextualise data collected from in-depth interviews.

## **3.4 Data Analysis and Meaning-Making**

To make sense of the collated data, I conducted discourse analysis on official documents, and computer-aided qualitative analysis on data from archival research, interviews and my research diary entries. Prior to commencing data analysis, I listened closely to the recorded interviews and transcribed them. Turning voice data into textual formats necessarily resulted in some loss of information. However, I noted any significant pauses, laughter, body language

and my observations within the interview transcripts. As the interviews were recorded, I was able to listen to them during various stages of data analysis.

The data analysis stage is dynamic, cyclical and iterative. It also intertwines and overlaps with data collection and writing. Boeije (2010, p. 89) calls this the “spiral of analysis”, which consists of five steps: first, a thorough review of relevant literature; second, comparing research materials systematically; third, coding to reduce and reorganise data; fourth, analytical induction (i.e. searching for the most appropriate theoretical explanation for the data); and finally, “thinking and doing”. Through this repeated process, findings begin to “emerge” from the data.

Since I have conceptualised migration (i.e. multiple visits across the fieldwork sites) as an integral part of this research, I see my “fieldwork” as significant in contributing towards my understanding of the collated data, while clarifying the framing of this research. Furthermore, I continued to emphasise my reflexive understanding of this research and what it means for broader theoretical understanding *beyond* the material I collated during the research. While in the earlier stages of this research I thought that it was a piece of work about Malaysia’s brain drain, I have now reached a stage to see how Malaysia’s contemporary migration phenomena can be explained through a reflexive reading of British colonial legacies.

### **3.4.1 Discourse Analysis**

According to Gill (2000, p. 178), discourse analysis entails sceptical reading by “interrogating [the analyst’s] assumptions and the ways [he/she] habitually make sense of things”. Furthermore, the discourse analyst is “involved *simultaneously* in analysing discourse and analysing the interpretive context” (p. 175, original italics). In other words, the analyst should be aware that he/she is a social agent who is embedded in certain socio-cultural contexts, yet at the same time reminded to maintain objectivity in critically questioning the meanings behind the texts as they are presented. Thus, a text should be understood in relation to its contextual background. This includes the reason for the text, the location it is published, the temporal dimension of its release, the target audience, as well as the position and underlying motivations of the writer.

While discourse analysis is typically used as a technique to analyse official texts and documents, I find that its principles can be generalised to data analysis in general. In reading and interpreting interview data, I employed similar critical perspectives as I would for other texts. I

sought to understand the underlying meanings behind what my respondents were saying and not saying. I paid attention to pauses and instances when my respondents struggled to articulate their answers.

### 3.4.2 Computer-Aided Qualitative Analysis

I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, as a tool to assist in managing respondent-related data, and data reduction of the interview transcripts. I created fields to capture demographic details for each respondent, such as age, gender, profession, marital status, citizenship and PR status, number of years in current location, and family migration. Each respondent's case file is linked to the interview transcript, as well as any other related data such as web resources (e.g. their web presence, or news mentioning their names and professional activities), field notes, coding memos and annotations during various research stages.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), a code is an abstract representation of an object or a phenomenon. In other words, a code is “a summarising phrase” (Boeije, 2010, p. 96) for a fragment of text that captures the inherent meaning and expresses that meaning in the form of a concept or category. Coding is necessary as it helps data reduction and facilitates data interpretation. Using computer-aided software such as NVivo facilitates the indexing and retrieval of raw data and processed codes in making sense of the research project as a whole.

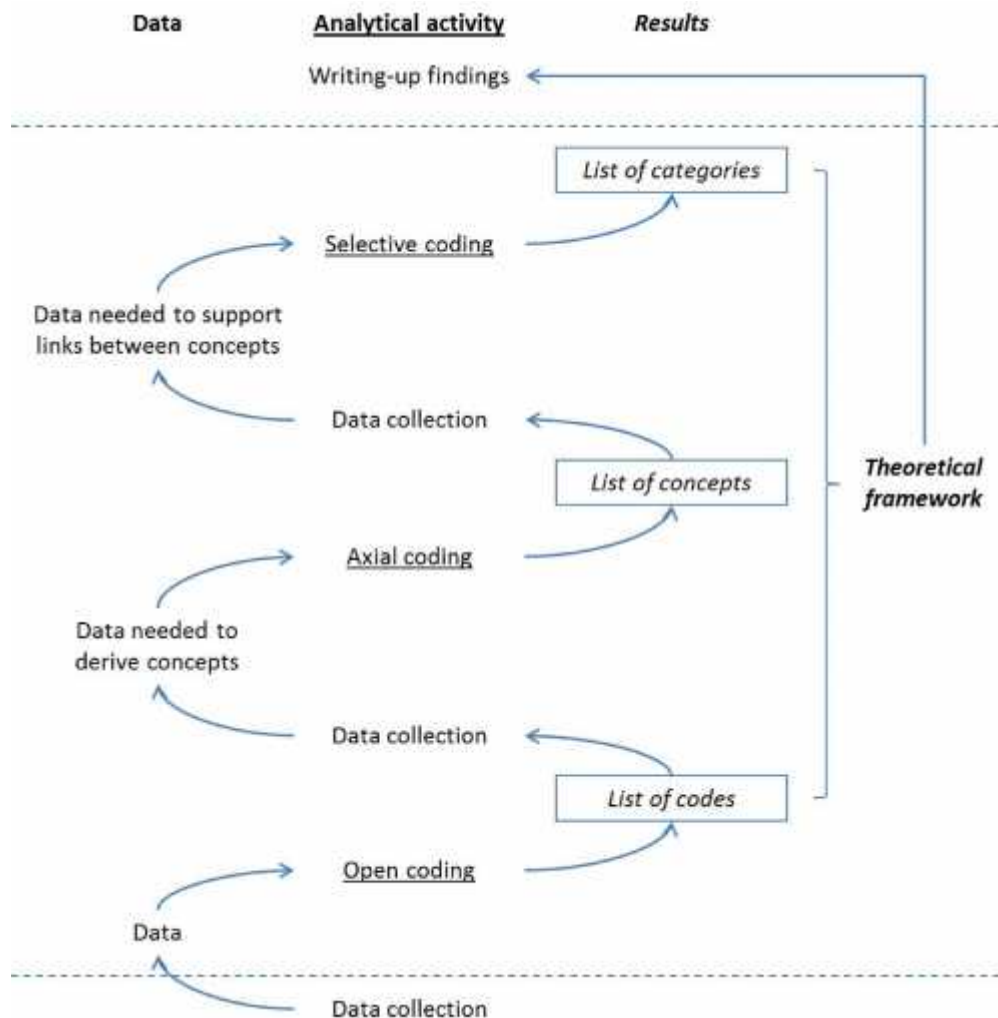
My coding strategy broadly follows three levels of coding typically used for grounded theory approach (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Oktay, 2012). First, I conducted “open coding” by quickly coding interview narratives at face value. I added secondary codes according to details within each narrative excerpt (e.g. “citizenship meanings” → “place of birth”). Next, I conducted “axial coding” by adding on my comments and reflections after a close reading of these codes and associated narratives. This included any observations, insights, ideas, and further questions at a conceptual level beyond each interview transcript. I also compared coding across respondents to find abstract connections and disconnections. This allowed me to construct a hierarchy of codes (e.g. “citizenship meanings” → “Malaysian citizenship” → “primordial”).

Finally, I conducted “selective coding” by focusing on the emergent categories of “citizenship”, “migration” and “life as a migrant/diaspora”. The last two categories eventually merged into “Malaysian citizenship habitus”. **Figure 3.4** illustrates my data analysis process, while **Table 3.1**



illustrates the codes, concepts and categories that emerged after I conducted the three-step coding.

### Figure 3.4: Illustration of Data Analysis Process



Source: Modified after Boeije (2010)

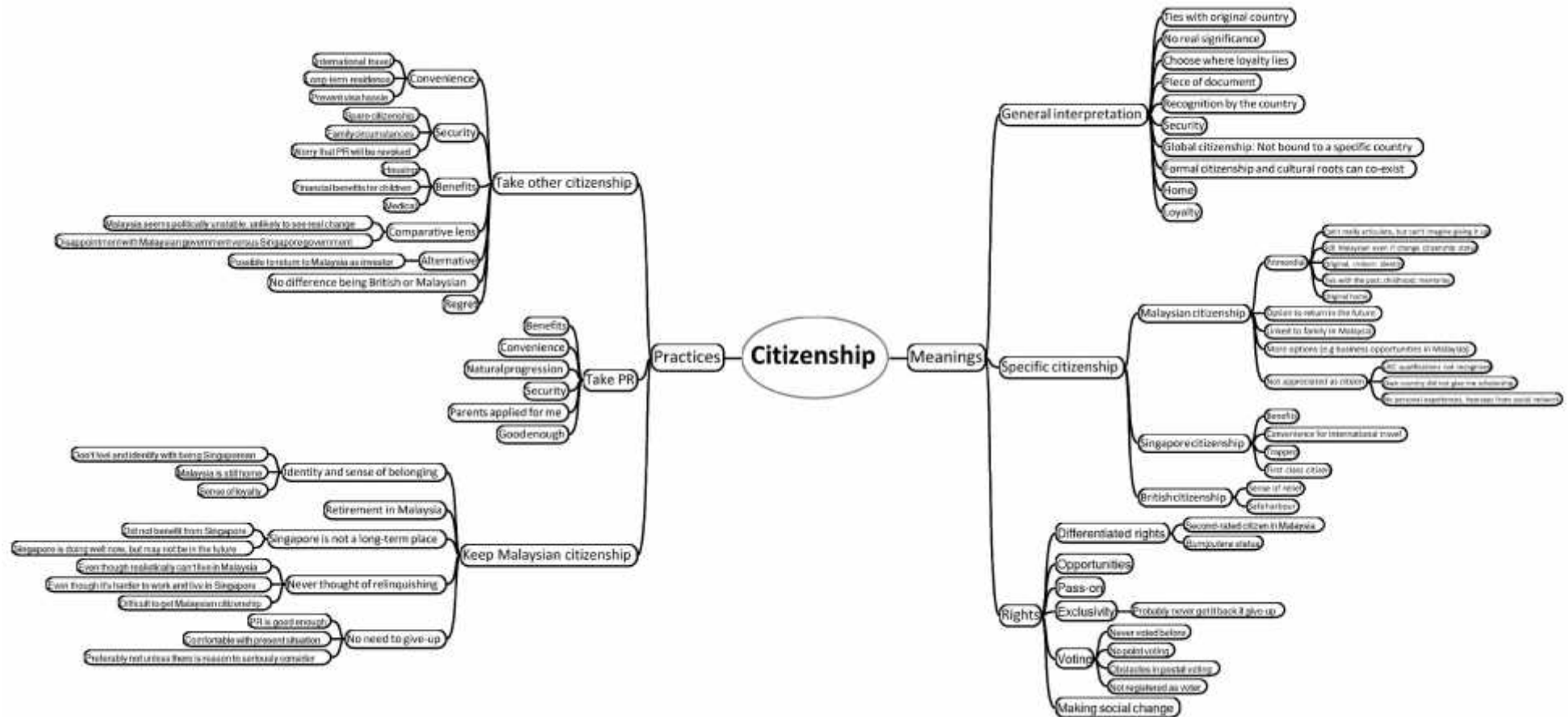
I also used Docear, a mind mapping software, to help me visualise the relationships between the different levels of codes. I built mind maps on the three categories I identified from the NVivo coding. **Figure 3.5** shows a summarised example of the mind map on “citizenship”. The data analysis process included numerous back-and-forth checking of detailed narratives, first and second-level codes, and the thematic mind maps. This iterative process helped me in gaining greater clarity in identifying the emergent themes and meanings. This also overlaps with my “transnational research migration” trajectory, as I will explain in the next section.

**Table 3.1: Codes, Concepts and Categories Developed through Three Stages of Coding**

Codes (open coding)	Concepts (axial coding)	Categories (selective coding)
“I don’t think it was an option to us”	<i>Automatically not considering Malaysian universities</i>	<i>Culture of migration</i>
[blank look]		
“I have never thought about going to public universities”		
“You will never get the course you applied for”		
MICSS student: qualifications not recognised		
Racial discrimination by university lecturers	<i>Malaysian universities: Perceptions and experiences</i>	
Sister being assigned “the silliest course”		
No personal experience of racial discrimination, but relates stories of others		
“My dad already sort of set everything aside financially”	<i>Studying abroad: Parents and family</i>	
“Parents’ generation acknowledge that the Chinese in particular will not have a very bright future in Malaysia”		
Parents willing to invest in education		
Parents’ previous overseas education experience		
Follow siblings’ paths		
Cousins and family friends studying abroad		
Presence of extended family members abroad		
Alumni networks abroad (Taiwan, USA)		
“I’m not even sure like how I came about to that thinking”	<i>Studying abroad: Internalised practice</i>	
Brought up to think that way		
“It just kind of happened”		
“Going abroad is sort of a given already”		
ASEAN Scholarship	<i>Education pathways</i>	
JB-Singapore commuters		
Private college pre-university programmes		
Twinning programmes		
Transnational movements		
Go to Singapore to skip 1-year Remove class	<i>Escaping Malaysia’s education system</i>	
MICSS: Go to Singapore or Taiwan		
Racial quotas		
“You have to think of your parents, you have to think of your own kids”	<i>Future social mobility</i>	
“Father worked extra hard so that we can have a better life”		
Migration as opportunity to circumvent limitations		
Have to plan for kids’ education		

Source: Author

Figure 3.5: Example of Coding Visualisation Using Docear



Source: Author

### 3.4.3 “Fieldwork”

*... a self-conscious shifting of social and geographical location can be an extraordinarily valuable methodology for understanding social and cultural life, both through the discovery of phenomena that would otherwise remain invisible and through the acquisition of new perspectives on things we thought we already understood. Fieldwork, in this light, may be understood as a form of motivated and stylized dislocation. Rather than a set of labels that pins down one's identity and perspective, location becomes visible here as an ongoing project.*

Gupta and Ferguson (1997, pp. 36-37)

In September 2011, I started fieldwork in Singapore and KL. During the 17-week fieldwork, I based myself in Singapore, and travelled to KL and JB whenever I managed to arrange interviews. In total, I made five trips to KL and two trips to JB. I then “returned” to London in January 2012 to commence the second phase of fieldwork. As this “return” to London coincided with my university teaching responsibilities, it was not “fieldwork” *per se* – I was based in London and could interview respondents as and when possible. In July 2012, I again “returned” to Singapore and KL as a visiting research student in Singapore. This enabled me to be “in-the-field” again to conduct new and follow-up interviews. Through my movements in and out of the field (**Figure 3.6**), I encountered and conversed with 67 respondents. Most interviews were conducted in person, although a few took place through Skype and email. The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to three hours, and some continued as extended informal conversations after the “interviews”.

My “transnational research migration” trajectory was also crucial in developing my analytical and theoretical frame to interpret the research data. In December 2011, I was invited to present at a workshop in KL on Malaysia’s brain drain. In February 2012, I presented a paper at a graduate conference in Singapore on Asia-Pacific migrations. In July 2012, I presented my work at two conferences in Edinburgh and KL respectively. The former focused on questioning “diaspora”, while the latter focused on Malaysia’s diaspora strategies. In October 2012, as part of a three-month research exchange in Singapore, I had the opportunity to present my thesis research in an hour-long seminar. I also had the benefit of a research group meeting to discuss my conference paper, which I subsequently presented in November 2012 at the conference on diaspora strategies and migration-as-development.

These conferences were instrumental in shaping my theoretical approach for this research. The presentations offered opportunities for me to test different theoretical frameworks and

assess if the collated data “fits”. Furthermore, ideas gained through panel discussions also inspired me to follow certain theoretical trajectories. As I started writing up in August 2012, this also intensified the “spiral of analysis”, which coincided with my being in the field *and* academia during my research exchange in Singapore. It was during this period of intensive writing, thinking and doing that I developed my theoretical argument for Malaysia’s citizenship habitus.

**Figure 3.6: My “Fieldwork” Trajectory**

	Singapore	KL/JB	London/UK
Jul-11	<i>Prelim-Fieldwork</i>		
Aug-11			<i>PhD upgrade review</i>
Sep-11	<i>Fieldwork</i>		
Oct-11			
Nov-11			
Dec-11	<i>Fieldwork</i>	<i>Workshop</i>	
Jan-12			<i>Teaching + Fieldwork</i>
Feb-12	<i>Conference</i>		
Mar-12			
Apr-12			
May-12			
Jun-12			
Jul-12		<i>Conference</i>	<i>Conference</i>
Aug-12	<i>Research exchange + Fieldwork + Writing-up</i>		
Sep-12			
Oct-12			
Nov-12			
Dec-12		<i>Writing-up</i>	
Jan-13			<i>Teaching + Writing-up</i>
Feb-13			
Mar-13			<i>Writing-up</i>
Apr-13			
May-13			
Jun-13			
Jul-13			
Aug-13			
Sep-13			

Source: Author

#### **3.4.4 Navigating Personal Understanding and Positionality**

In parallel to the “official” research activities of data collection, conference presentations and writing, I continued to think reflexively about my own position in relation to this research. There were three distinct phases in my reflexive journey. The first occurred when I was deeply

immersed in interviews and movements in-and-out of the field sites. My reflections then were mostly inward-looking and revolved around my connections to my respondents' narratives. I found similarities in my own thoughts and that of my respondents' narratives: we talked of Malaysia as a place/concept that holds so much meaning for us. The emotions we felt for Malaysia were complex and intertwined – from unquestioned affiliation, perpetual love, to hopes in the midst of many disappointments (**Figure 3.7**).

The second phase occurred after I “left” the field and “retreated” into intensive analysis and writing. This period accorded me emotional distance to stand back and interpret the collated data more critically and “objectively”. My research diary entries during this second phase were questioning, probing, and more outward-looking (**Figure 3.8**). It was also during this period that I developed the concept of citizenship habitus, and recognised the importance of “race” in the Malaysian context.

The final phase occurred after I continually found myself “stuck” with the writing of a particular chapter. I realised the need to return to history in order to contextualise my respondents' narratives and practices. It was at this point that I revisited TNA and read first-hand specific parts of colonial history I had missed earlier. It was also during this stage that I felt anger and sadness: anger about the wrongs of colonialism, and sadness about the longevity of colonial legacies predicated upon current and future generations of former colonies. My research diary entries during this final phase showed anger and determination (**Figure 3.9**). I finally knew what it was that I want to communicate through this research: it is a journey of knowing about colonial legacies that is larger than any of my respondents' and my migration stories.

As Skeggs (2002, p. 361) highlights, “[t]he ability to be reflexive via the experience of others is a privilege, a position of mobility and power, a mobilization of cultural resources.” Indeed, I am extremely lucky and privileged to be in this position. Through my positionality and encounters with my respondents and archival records, I am able to question, research, and understand the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. More importantly, through this migration research methodology combining archival research, interview-conversations and my reflexive research diary entries, I have finally come to realise what this research is really about (**Figure 3.10**).

**Figure 3.7: Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase I**

*Why do I feel so strongly about being Malaysian, and so strongly for Malaysia? What does the term 'Malaysia' mean to me? Upon layers of reflection, I think 'Malaysia' is a familiar home to me. It is linked to my childhood, my beginnings, my family, my roots. It is where my story begins, it is the beginnings of who I am and who I will become. It is also where my family continues to live in. Perhaps this strong sense of attachment and belonging is also an oppositional reaction – because nowhere else in the world can accord me this (emotional) feeling, therefore Malaysia is home for me. It doesn't matter that I spent only 16 years of my life in Malaysia – Malaysia continues to be home, and it continues to be a strong foundation of who I am.*

*This land – with its mountains, plantations, waterfalls, beaches, small towns, people whom I may never meet, talk to and understand, yet with whom I share the same link by virtue of being Malaysian – is home. Perhaps no matter where my wanderings bring me to, this land will always be home. Perhaps even after the loss of my family members (touch wood), this land will continue to hold the memories of family and home. But will it accept me?*

*In this sense, I am no different from some of my respondents. I too, think that there is nowhere to call home except Malaysia. My physical and temporary homes elsewhere are just what they are – physical abode that is temporary and meaningless because they can never replace my 'real' home that is Malaysia.*

Entry in research diary, 20 Jul 2011

*And so in less than 12 hours' time I will be taking the plane to London. This marks the end of my 17-weeks' field work. Had I achieved what I set out to achieve? What has changed? Had I changed?*

*Looking back, I have walked an unpredictable journey that led me to cross paths with people I would never have the opportunity to encounter if I had stayed on my life path. The research provided me a platform to bridge across to people whose lives would have proceeded along in parallel universe to mine. The meetings and interviews gave them and myself a chance to ponder about questions that we hold dear, and to exchange ideas and thoughts. I truly treasure these moments of connections, because sometimes they are like instances of hand-shakes with people who really does understand what you are talking about.*

Entry in research diary, 8 Jan 2012

Source: Author

**Figure 3.8: Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase II**

*I found that almost everyone thought of “Malaysia” in two dialectical ways. First, on the positive side, “Malaysia” means childhood memories, the presence of family and friends, the nostalgic yearning for a simpler life, or the good life. Second, on the negative side, “Malaysia” also means declining developments, disappointment with the government and racial-political issues. There seems to be two different conceptualisations of what “Malaysia” means – and both can exist together without necessarily conflicting with each other.*

*It is perhaps this neat division in the minds of my respondents that they are able to rationalise their continual love/loyalty to Malaysia, and their continual stays away from Malaysia. The Malaysian citizenship is the only affirmative tie/connection that materially binds them to the idea that they are Malaysian. Even though many talked about citizenship being just a paper documentation, and that if they converted their citizenships they will never feel British or Singaporean or whatever, this does not seem to be the same frame of understanding they apply to their Malaysian citizenship. **For them, their Malaysian citizenship = them.** It almost seems as if it doesn’t matter if there is an official recognition from the Malaysian state of their inclusion as Malaysian citizens. It is sufficient that they are Malaysian from the bottom of their heart. This is an emotional belonging that is individually nurtured and sustained, and hence does not require any external affirmation – not from the society, the community, nor from the country.*

*But is this peculiar to Malaysians only? Am I being overly nostalgic in drawing this conclusion? Do other people in other nation-states feel the same way? If not, what are the different degrees of such belonging? Why are there these differences? What does that mean for Malaysia?*

Entry in research diary, 8 Feb 2012

*[J] then said: “I have always thought that Malaysians are Malay.” ... This morning’s conversation brought home to me the fact that people outside of Malaysia are not aware of [the things] that we Malaysians have taken-for-granted our whole lives. These were the norms that we have been educated to accept and never to question. These were things that would have seen social movements, protests and uprisings in Western democratic societies. Yet we lived with it and accepted it as part of life. We naturally chose alternative routes and paths to circumvent these structural constraints that are never written in stone anyway. Agency. Do we really have that?*

Entry in research diary, 26 Feb 2012

*I particularly liked [A]’s questions about whether gender was an important factor, and about how I wanted to use habitus. When I thought about both questions, I realised that they can be answered by the same answer: ethnicity. Ethnicity has been a structuring structure in Malaysia’s case. We were conditioned into thinking that we are different by virtue of our different ethnicities. So the Malays are of a certain characteristic, the Chinese were another, the Indians were another, and so on. We occupied different imagined spaces in more or less the way the big brother wanted us to operate within. We stayed within the boundaries of what we thought we ought to stay within, never thinking that it is possible to go beyond, to open up the spaces, or to venture into spaces of the others.*

*Habitus. A culture of migration. Conditioned thoughts, actions and behaviours. But how long can we be designed to obey and operate in clockwork? When we start thinking and questioning, when we seek the truth and better solutions – or is that even possible?*

Entry in research diary, 10 Mar 2012

Source: Author



**Figure 3.9: Excerpts from Research Diary, Phase III**

*So I started reading again. About Malaysia's history, about ethnicity, about the British colonial period. I find that I had to visit the National Archives again, to read up on things that I hadn't found previously because I only focused on documents relating to "citizenship" and "nationality". I ventured into education policies and systems, schools and teacher training, elections and political parties, UK aid to Malaysia, etc. As I read more and more, I became angrier and angrier about colonialism. The after-effects of colonialism persists long after the physical end of colonial rule, and is borne by the individuals and collective Malaysian citizenry. Why should it be so? Why do we have to bear the burden of ethnic-politics, power struggles of political elites, and the economically-driven concerns of the British colonial administration of that time?*

*Sure, they could not have envisioned such long lasting effects on the Malaysian society, as well as the exact material forms these effects took on. They could not have envisioned how their insistence on the special rights of the Malays and the status of the Malay Rulers would eventually translate itself into affirmative action policies and structural factors stratifying people into arbitrary ethnic categories that predetermined their social mobility paths. They could not have envisioned that this would translate into Malaysia's migration phenomena, which comes to affect them now in the form of immigration.*

Excerpt from research diary, 30 March 2013

*I was processing archive materials I collected from the National Archives. Reading the statement by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the preliminary plans for Malayan Union and how MacMichael was tasked to approach the Malay sultans, I felt anger and sadness. The feelings were so intense that I was unable to continue with my work objectively. I turned to [a PhD colleague] and asked her if she had ever felt angry about her research data. She listened and showed a sympathetic look on her face, saying "It must be horrible", but I don't think she could really understand what I meant and feel.*

*Is it possible to remain objective and neutral about "academic" research? I care deeply about the issue I am researching, beyond mere academic interest. I am deeply saddened by the new understanding I have gained. I have the benefit of access to these documents and can read firsthand how things panned out in the past. But how many of Malaysian people can have this access? ... I saw very clearly how things unknowingly set in place by the British colonial administration become structures of exclusion that continue to impact on Malaysians today. I see all this unfairness, but yet many Malaysians do not see it. Especially those who are now in positions of power. They do not see how they came to be in their current positions. And without that understanding they could never be inclusive or reflexively aware of those they inadvertently exclude.*

*I feel all this anger, sadness and frustration. I feel that I should write my thesis as fast as possible so that I can get this message out to as wide an audience as possible.*

Entry in research diary, 15 April 2013

Source: Author

Figure 3.10: Research Blog Post, 20 April 2013

**WHAT I'VE LEARNT**

**What I thought this was**

*I started this PhD project thinking that it is about brain drain.*

*I thought it was a research on why mobile Malaysians leave, migrate further, and/or return.*

*I thought it was about understanding why they decide to keep or renounce their Malaysian citizenship, why they decide to take other permanent residence (PR) status and/or other citizenship.*

*But I realise now that it is much more than that.*

*Of course, I can just write it as a story of brain drain, people moving to achieve their aspirations, people acquiring citizenship and PR statuses as strategies to hedge against the unknown future.*

**What I realise this is**

*But the story is much more complex and nuanced.*

*At first glance, we are making individual and personal decisions. But we are the products of history and accumulated knowledge. We act in certain ways, belief in certain taken-for-granted "truths", do what is considered in our "best interests".*

*We forget to understand how things came to be, precisely because of historical forces. We are caught in petty arguments about who gains and who loses. We forget that the forces that messed up our society – or country, if you would like to call it that – continue to extract and capitalise on our resources.*

**What I've learnt**

*I've learnt that "truths" can be deconstructed. In that process, I've learnt that nothing is absolute – everything is relative. What is right or wrong at this point in time, can be understood in another way, in another time.*

*I've learnt to be humble because there is so much more I don't know.*

*I've learnt that I am only a minute particle of sand in the universe. I've learnt that a lifetime is short and temporary. But within this temporary existence, I've learnt to make the most out of it in terms of contributions to humanity.*

*So I'm re-writing my thesis for a third time, because I think this third attempt can say much more about human existence. It is an obligation I have/want to fulfil because this research journey has given me so much insights about life and humanity. In return, this will be my contribution towards an understanding of our messy world.*

Source: Author

### 3.5 Summary

This research commenced as a personal quest to understand questions about being Malaysian in migration. However, the research process shaped the evolution of the research framing, data interpretation and analysis. In this sense, my migration methodology is crucial to this study. I paid attention to my observations, feelings, thoughts and insights, and documented these in my research diary as I traversed across the three field sites. I placed equal emphasis on encounters and interview-conversations with my respondents and the wider Malaysian readership at large. My research blog has been instrumental in this process: firstly, in recruiting respondents beyond my immediate social network; secondly, as a space for me to think through the act of writing; and thirdly, as a communication platform for me and others who are interested in the same issues.

Through my multiple journeys in and out of the field sites, I have attained a heightened sense of awareness and reflexivity – not *just* about this research and the theoretical understandings, but also about reconciling my life before, during and after this study in the broader context of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. Coffey (1999, p. 158) writes that:

*[t]he self is shaped by relationships, interactions and experiences which are not suspended for the duration of fieldwork. ... The ethnographic self cannot be separated out from the facets and phases of qualitative fieldwork. The self should not be viewed in isolation; as tangential to the practical and intellectual processes of fieldwork.*

Indeed, it was – and *is* – impossible to separate out the boundaries of research, fieldwork and personal life, as I am simultaneously the theorist, researcher, and mobile Malaysian.

My positionality necessarily comes with advantages and limitations. While my “shared identity” with some of my respondents enabled easier access for recruitment and facilitated meaningful conversations, my “othered identity” may also have limited access towards potential respondents who consciously stayed away. Furthermore, my positionality and personal motivation could have cast a certain analytical stance in my interpretation of data. The same piece of data – archival document or interview-conversation – could be differentially-interpreted with different research implications, depending on the researcher's disciplinary interest and training, epistemological philosophy, and personal experiences and dispositions.

Researching from within – i.e. as insider – is a difficult and complicated task. As Ghosh and Wang (2003, p. 281) argue:

*The self-reflexive quest to understand the evolution of our transnational identities was difficult and time-consuming. ... We were inundated with emotions that, rather than being therapeutic, left us at an impasse. We toiled, trying to articulate our feelings and emotions in appropriate 'English' words and phrases, which did not come naturally. ... This experience raises questions about rendering complex concepts, such as consciousness and identity, 'thought out' in one language and mode and expressed in the syntax and cadences of another.*

Similarly, the transitions across the processes of mapping, understanding and explaining Malaysia's citizenship habitus through academic writing remain a continued struggle for me throughout this research process. However, I believe that research is never absolutely objective, nor definitive. What I have documented in this thesis is a specific interpretation that I have arrived at after experiencing this research journey.

My supervisor had asked me this question in the early stages of my research journey: "Do you think another researcher with the same research skills could have done this research?" My answer was an immediate "No". Indeed, I am able to conceptualise and conduct this research precisely because of who I am – a Malaysian-Chinese who has gone through certain education experience in Malaysia; a transnational migrant who has lived as a student and PR in Singapore, and postgraduate student in London; a reflexive migrant-researcher who is interested to find answers to a confluence of theoretical, empirical and personal questions. Crucially, this includes my intellectual and political awareness, as I progressed through this research journey, which necessarily has implications for how I have interpreted the research data and made research decisions. Who I am, and who I become, are both the motivations for, and outcomes of this research. In other words, I am a product of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. This research has been designed to examine *how* and *why* this came to be through my reflexive reading of the historicity of Malaysia's citizenship and my interview-conversations with mobile Malaysians.

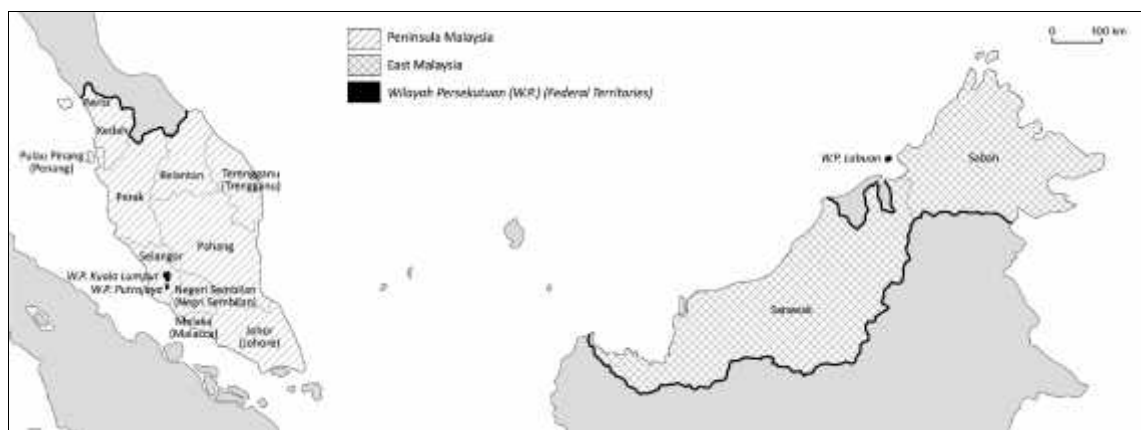
**PART II – HISTORY MATTERS:**

**THE MAKING OF MALAYSIA’S CITIZENSHIP HABITUS**

## CHAPTER 4. BRITISH COLONIAL LEGACIES

Malaysia is a post-colonial independent country comprising 13 states and three federal territories over an area of 329,847 square kilometres. Geographically, the country comprises Peninsula Malaysia (or West Malaysia), and the North Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak (or East Malaysia) (**Figure 4.1**). Under British colonial rule (late-18th century to mid-20th century) the different states and surrounding regions were organised into different territories (see **Section 4.2**). The Federation of Malaya (i.e. Peninsula Malaysia today) gained independence from the British colonial administration on 31 August 1957. In 1963, the North Borneo states and Singapore joined the Federation of Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia. In 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent country.

**Figure 4.1: States of Malaysia**



Source: Author

Politically, Malaysia operates a government system based on federal constitutional monarchy and Westminster-style parliamentary democracy at two levels. At the federal level, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (lit. “He who is made Lord”) is the head of state, while the Prime Minister is the head of government. At the state level, the Sultan (“Ruler” or “King”) is the head of state, while the *Menteri Besar* (“Chief Minister”) is the head of state government. Nine of the 13 states (except Penang, Melaka, Sabah and Sarawak) retain their royal families with the respective Sultans. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* is elected amongst the nine Sultans to serve a five-year term on a rotational succession basis determined by the Conference of Rulers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The Conference of Rulers is the only institution of its kind in existence in the world today.

Malaysia's legislative branch consists of *Dewan Negara* (lit. "Chamber of the Nation") or Senate, and *Dewan Rakyat* (lit. "Chamber of the People") or House of Representatives. *Dewan Negara* consists of 70 seats, of which 44 members are appointed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* with the Prime Minister's advice, and 26 elected by 13 Stated Legislative Assembly to serve three-year terms with a two term limit. *Dewan Rakyat* consists of 222 seats, where members are elected in general elections to serve a five-year term.

**Table 4.1: Population of Malaysia, 1957-2012**

Year	Number (million)
1957	0.62
1960	0.69
1970	10.88
1980	13.87
1990	18.10
2000	23.49
2010	28.33
2012	29.33

Source: DOSM (2011a, 2012a)

**Table 4.2: Malaysian Citizens by Ethnic Group**

Ethnic group	Number (thousand)			Percentage (%)		
	1991	2000	2005	1991	2000	2005
Malays	8,521.9	11,680.4	13,190.2	50.7	53.4	54.1
Other <i>Bumiputeras</i>	1,778.0	2,567.8	2,870.3	10.6	11.7	11.8
Chinese	4,623.9	5,691.9	6,154.9	27.5	26.0	25.3
Indians	1,316.1	1,680.1	1,834.8	7.8	7.7	7.5
Others	572.3	269.7	311.8	3.4	1.2	1.3
Total	16,812.3	21,889.7	24,362.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Saw (2007)

Demographically, Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with a population of 29.3 million in 2012 (**Table 4.1**). The ethnic composition consists of a Malay majority, followed by the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups (**Table 4.2**).

This chapter provides the historical context to understand the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. I follow Hall's (1980, p. 338) suggestion – to start "from the concrete historical 'work' which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions – as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation" – to trace how Malaysia's citizenship habitus came into being. This

historically-grounded understanding is crucial to contextualise my research findings in **Part III** of this thesis.

Following this introduction, I briefly describe conditions before British colonial rule (**Section 4.1**). I focus on two areas: firstly, the normalcy of migration; and secondly, concepts of state, citizenship and government in the Malay Sultanates. The bulk of this chapter focuses on the British colonial period (introduced in **Section 4.2**) and elaborates on three areas of British colonial legacies relevant to the discussion on contemporary mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices. This includes: firstly, the formalisation of racial categories and stereotypes, including the construction of Malay indigeneity (**Section 4.3.1**); secondly, aspirations for education, which is related to race-stratified education system, overseas scholarships and the link between education qualification and social hierarchy (**Section 4.3.2**); and thirdly, the constitution of Western liberal citizenship and the introduction of modern nation-state sovereignty (**Section 4.3.3**). Finally, I end with a summary (**Section 4.4**) to contextualise the next chapter.

#### **4.1 Before British Colonial Rule**

Since the 14th century, the area known as Malaysia today has been home to native and immigrant populations alike, under the rule of various political entities. While the population in Peninsula Malaysia consisted mainly of the *immigrant* Malays, Chinese and Indians, the population in Sabah and Sarawak consisted of a greater diversity of *indigenous* tribes. The Malay Sultanates can be seen as early forms of political states prior to the arrival of British colonial rule. However, localised concepts of “government” and “citizen” differed from that in Western understanding. The concept of loyalty – linked to ideas of servitude and subjecthood towards the hereditary king – is significant in ruler-subject relations. This is further reinforced by the hierarchical social structure with a distinct ruling and subject class. Thus, two significant developments were established in the region prior to British colonial intervention: firstly, the normalcy of migration and the intermixing of native and immigrant populations; and secondly, the existence of Malay Sultanates with localised concepts of ruler-subject relations.

##### **4.1.1 Migration and Settlement**

*The civilisations of the Malay world are founded on movements of people rather than settled accumulations of population. Although the coming of European rule was associated with large influxes of population, migration was deeply rooted in the culture*



*of the region as a resource from pre-colonial times in state-building and economic development, and as a vital stimulus to the emergence of court cultures and indigenous entrepreneurship. A long history of external migrations introduced Indian learning and Islam; the great tradition of internal migration carried the new cultures throughout the region. By the eighteenth century, migrations within Southeast Asia were undergoing a slow sea-change, moving more from east to west and from south to north. In this period, the Malay peninsula was a fractured and fluid political world.*

Harper (2001, pp. 15-16)

Historians have established that migratory movements have been a common way of life amongst the early populations in the Malay Archipelago. Wang (1985, p. 53), for example, observed that “migration was normal”, and that

*[t]his normalcy of emigration and immigration deserves attention because it also underlies the normalcy of eventual settlement, of the acceptance by these migrants of the new conditions of life in their adopted land and of their acceptance by those who were natives or who had settled earlier.*

Indeed, the territory known as Malaysia today has been home to a multi-ethnic and immigrant population since the 15th century (see Reid, 2008). According to Reid (2010), before 1870 there were a few major waves of migrants to the region. This includes firstly, the Malay kings from Palembang to Temasek to Melaka in the 14th and 15th centuries; secondly, the Minangkabaus from Sumatera who settled in what is known as Negeri Sembilan today; thirdly, the Bugis who settled in Selangor, Kedah and Johor in the 16th to 17th centuries; fourthly, the flocking of Europeans, Chinese, Indian, Burmese, Siamese, Javanese and Buginese peoples to the trade centres of Melaka (from 1511), Penang (from 1786) and Singapore (from 1819); fifthly, the Chinese mining and agricultural pioneers to Johor and Kelantan in the 19th century; organised contract labourers, including Cantonese, Tamil and Javanese in the 19th century; and finally, “enterprising people” from Asia generally, who came on their own initiatives.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the early 16th century, the Malayan Peninsula (i.e. Peninsula Malaysia today) was first under the rule of the Sri Vijaya Empire (from 7th and 8th century), the Majapahit Empire in the 14th century, and thereafter various Malay sultanates (Saw, 2007). The original population consisted of *orang asli* (lit. “original peoples”) and *orang laut* (lit. “sea peoples”), while the influx of the Malays came after Parameswara, a Hindu Sumatran Prince, founded the Malacca dynasty (Ryan, 1976, p. 15). Trade flourished as Malacca capitalised on its strategic location along the sea route. Malacca also established its importance as the centre for dissemination of Islam to the surrounding region, including Peninsula Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo (Bedlington, 1978, p. 24).

Thus, the Malay Peninsula has been a popular migration centre for migratory peoples in the region. Immigration control and citizenship – concepts in relation to the modern nation-state as we understand today – were not major issues for a few interrelated reasons. First, there were no concrete and universally accepted concepts of national borders and documenting of citizen populations in the region. As Milner (1982, p. 2) noted, “Malays expressed no sense of “nationhood”; nor did they consider themselves members of a race which owed its origins to a single ancestor or homeland.” Second, there was relative fluidity in territorial boundaries and movements across borders. Third, the migratory flows include various temporary, semi-permanent and permanent settlements. All these create the origins of a culture of migration – a point I will return to in **Chapter 7**.

#### **4.1.2 Malay Sultanates, Kerajaan and Ruler-Subject Relations**

The Malacca sultanate established the indigenous Malay political system and the ruler-subject relationship that persisted in some forms until present day Malaysia. Firstly, the ruling class (the Sultan, the aristocracy and the chiefs) is distinct from the subject class (the *rakyat*, i.e. commoners or subjects) and enjoys authority and associated privileges. Secondly, the Sultan embodies the legitimate protector of Malay values, while the subject accords “unswerving loyalty” (Bedlington, 1978, p. 28) to his ruler and those in authority. This was further reinforced by the *derhaka* (lit. “crime of treason”) and *daulat* (lit. “kingship”, “majesty” or “sanctity”) practices, where disloyalty to the Sultan was severely punished, including killing of entire families and destruction of homes (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p. 45). Thirdly, this ruler-subject political system was propagated to the rest of the Malay sultanates within the Malacca sultanate’s hinterland (e.g. Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan,<sup>16</sup> Pahang). However, each sultanate was an independent political entity.

The concepts of government, political institutions and citizenship in the Malay world, however, greatly differed from that as understood and practised in the Western world. The Malay word *kerajaan* (lit. “the state of having a raja/ruler”) was the closest in meaning to Western concepts of “state”, “kingdom” or “government”. However, Malay subjects “considered themselves to be living not in states or under governments, but in a *kerajaan*, in the “condition of having a raja”” (Milner, 1982, p. 114). Furthermore, the “actual concept of ‘citizenship’ did not exist in the *kerajaan*” (Milner, 1994, p. 128). This “state of having a ruler” means that the Malay subjects “visualised no other system” (Gullick, 1958, p. 44) of ruler-subject relations other than the *kerajaan*. It is, however, important to point out that this understanding of

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<sup>16</sup> “Negeri Sembilan” today.

“government” is that of direct ruler-subject relation where the ruler is accepted as hereditary king with authority over the subjects who do not enjoy democratic rights (e.g. land ownership and political rights). This is not an “undemocratic” political situation *per se*, as this must be contextualised to the local epistemologies of that historical milieu.

The significance of loyalty in the Malay Sultanate ruler-subject relations needs further explanation. According to Muzaffar (1979, p. 29)

*[i]t was largely because the rulers were perceived as divine, that unquestioning loyalty was accorded them by their subjects. Their power was supposed to be rooted in the very idea of the Omnipotent and for that reason defying their wishes would constitute a transgression of Divine authority. This supernatural quality about them - their ‘daulat’ - was that ordinary mortals had to fear.*

Muzaffar also suggests that this sense of “unquestioning loyalty” is further exacerbated by the hierarchical structure of the Malay society. This hierarchical consciousness “made the weak acutely conscious of their inferiority and lowliness in relation to the strong” (p. 20). On the other hand, Milner (1982, p. 106) suggests that this sense of loyalty can be understood through the concept of *bakti* (lit. “duty”, “service”, or “faithfulness”) or devotion. As he explains, in return for the delivery of devoted service to the Raja, a man receives individual advancement in the form of bestowed title or status. Thus, the automatic linking of loyalty to the ruler-subject relationship is both a *cultural* and *political* product. This sense of loyalty is crucial to Malaysia’s citizenship habitus, a point I return to throughout this thesis.

Sabah and Sarawak belonged to the Brunei Sultanate, which operated a similar political structure to that of the Malay sultanates in Peninsula Malaysia. The indigenous population of Sabah and Sarawak, however, were much more heterogeneous. Ongkili (1985, p. 4) notes that in Sarawak these include non-Muslims (e.g. the Ibans [Sea Dayaks], the Bidayuhs [Land Dayaks], the Kayans, the Kenyahs, and the Kelabits) and Muslims (e.g. the Kedayans, the Bisayas and the Melanaus), while in Sabah the majority are non-Muslims (e.g. the Muruts and the Kadazans).

The Brunei Sultanate was overshadowed by Malacca for two reasons. Firstly, Brunei’s less advantageous geographical location along the sea route meant that there was less frequent trade and contact with the external world. Secondly, as an indirect consequence of the lack of exposure, its administrative, intellectual and cultural development paled in comparison to Malacca (Ongkili, 1985, p. 5). This is significant in preserving the heterogeneity and relative insular nature of the indigenous populations in Sabah and Sarawak.

## **4.2 During British Colonial Rule**

### **4.2.1 Before World War II**

*The migrant populations showed a great sensitivity to new market linkages and forged wide credit relationships with the trading communities of the European settlements. On the eve of colonial rule, a rich cultural and linguistic patchwork of Malay settlement emerged ...*

Harper (2001, p. 16)

The arrival of the European power in Peninsula Malaysia started with the Portuguese capture of Malacca in 1511, followed by the Dutch in 1641. In 1786, the British occupied Penang. In 1795, Malacca was surrendered by the Dutch to the British. In 1819, the British established settlement in Singapore. In 1824, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty saw the Dutch surrendering Malacca to the British, while the British gave control of Sumatra and areas below the Malay Peninsula to the Dutch. By 1826, the British East India Company established the Straits Settlements (SS) comprising Penang, Malacca and Singapore. In 1867, the SS became a Crown Colony under the British Government.

In 1874, the Treaty of Pangkor was signed between the Sultan of Perak and the British. This was a landmark document that became the model for British intervention and control in the other Malay states. In 1896, the four Malay states of Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negri Sembilan were joined to form the Federated Malay States (FMS). Each state was to have a British Resident, “whose advice was to be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those concerning Malay religion and custom” (Colonial Office, 1943). The states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu<sup>17</sup> and Johore<sup>18</sup> remained as Unfederated Malay States (UMS) administered with a British Adviser. In 1909, the British signed the Anglo-Siamese Treaty, which saw Siam agreeing to give up its claim over the Malay States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu. The FMS and UMS, together with the SS, were collectively known as “British Malaya”.

British intervention in the Borneo states began in 1841 when James Brooke was granted the title of Raja of Sarawak by the Sultan of Brunei. In 1846, Labuan was ceded to the British by the Brunei Sultanate, and subsequently became a Crown Colony in 1848. In 1882, Sabah was governed by the British North Borneo Company, and subsequently became the British North

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<sup>17</sup> “Terengganu” today.

<sup>18</sup> “Johor” today.

Borneo protectorate in 1888. In 1890, Labuan was annexed to North Borneo, and joined the SS in 1906.

**Table 4.3: Malaysia's Former Political Entities under British Colonial Rule**

Year	Governance Structure	Political Entity	Geographical Area
1824-1867	Colonial possessions, East India Company	Straits Settlements	Penang, Dindings, Malacca, Singapore
1867-1946	Crown colonies, Colonial Office in London		
1896-1946	Federated British protectorates	Federated Malay States*	Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang
1909-1946	Separate British protectorates	Unfederated Malay States*	Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan, Johor
1946-1948	Centralised British protectorate	Malayan Union	All Malay states except Singapore
1948-1957	Federated British protectorate	Federation of Malaya	All Malay states except Singapore
1957-1963	Independent federation		
1963-1965	Independent federation	Federation of Malaysia	All Malay states, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak
1965 to present	Independent federation	Malaysia	All Malay states, Sabah, Sarawak

\* Collectively “British Malaya”

Source: Adapted from Azlan Tajuddin (2012, p. 20)

This brief history<sup>19</sup> shows that the geographical area constituting what we know as Malaysia today has taken on various economic and political forms during different periods of British colonial rule (**Table 4.3**). Depending on their economic and political significance to the British Government, different territories were placed under different governance structures. The SS were crucial trading centres, and thus were under direct British Government rule much earlier than the various Malay States. This was also facilitated by the fact that they were not previously under any Malay Sultanate rule.

In contrast, early British intervention in the FMS and UMS had to be negotiated through their respective Malay Sultans – i.e. through indirect rule. Indirect rule was essentially a strategy to pacify and subdue the Malay ruling classes, turning them into “an instrument of British colonial interests” (Abraham, 1983, p. 19). Through this pretence of upholding existing Malay traditions, the British gained indirect governance of the Malay subjects to secure their continued “economic exploitation of the colonized country” (Naimah Ishak, 2000, p. 88). The logic of

<sup>19</sup> See Kaur (1993) for a brief but comprehensive history of West and East Malaysia.

indirect rule has been used to justify British role as protector of the Malays. For example, in a report of his 1932 visit to Malaya, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote that indirect rule “will probably prove the greatest safeguard against the political submersion of the Malays ... [in a] popular government on western lines” as they “would be hopelessly outnumbered by the other races” (Wilson, 1933, p. 12). The effect of indirect rule – and more importantly, the ethos behind its adoption – is important to contextualise the colonial legacies I will discuss in this chapter.

#### 4.2.2 After World War II

During World War II, Malaya and Singapore were under Japanese occupation between 1941-1945 and 1942-1945 respectively. During wartime planning, there was a change in the British Government’s stance towards its colonial administration strategy (Caine, 1958). First, there was a push towards preparing former colonies towards independent rule. Second, there was a push towards shortening the transition period.

For Malaya especially, there was an additional push to “take the opportunity of reoccupation to try to tidy up [the] confusion of regimes” (Research Department, 1970, p. 5) with a centralised governance structure. Additionally, the Chinese in the Malay States and SS were recognised to be more active in resisting the Japanese than the Malays and “deserved an improved political position” (p. 5). Other accounts noted that there was an emergent Malayan nationalism, stimulated by the Japanese occupation, which demanded broader citizenship rights (Groves, 1962). Allen (1967) further suggests that the British government was primarily concerned with safeguarding its political and economic interests in Malaya and the region beyond the impending end of British colonial rule.

The solution was the Malayan Union (MU), a federal state consolidating the SS, FMS and UMS. Britain’s rationale for MU was evident in a secret memorandum entitled “Future Constitutional Policy for British Colonial Territories in South-East Asia”. The memorandum (Colonial Office, 1943, my emphases) outlined British pre-war interventions in the respective states before explaining the considerations for its post-war colonial strategy:

*5. ... Paradoxically enough the existence of the Federation [i.e. the FMS] proved an obstacle to further unification of the Peninsula. For **the rapidity of the country's material development had outstripped the advancement in education and administrative capacity of the Malays, and the British Residents found themselves compelled in fact to take over more or less direct control of the administrative system in the Federated States.** As a result there emerged a highly centralised bureaucracy based on the Federal capital, and **the Rulers of the States outside the Federation***

*fought shy of the loss of power which they felt they would suffer in the administration of their States by joining the Federation. ... The attitude of the Malay Rulers was also coloured by the fact that in the main the penetration of Malay communities by immigrant races had gone further in the Federated than in the Unfederated States.*

...

*8. In the novel conditions which will exist in our return to Malaya there will be an opportunity to achieve closer cooperation between the constituent parts of the territory as a whole without going through the lengthy process which the sponsors of decentralisation policy had to envisage. ... On a longer view, too, the pre-war system does not seem capable of adjustment to the promotion of broad-based governing institutions in accordance to our proclaimed purpose in Colonial policy. **There are important non-Malay Asiatic communities in the country which have substantially contributed to its development and have acquired permanent interests therein. But the Malay Rulers have always set their faces against any proposals to recognise as their subjects any persons not of Malay race or Mohammedan religion.***

...

*10. Within Malaya it is necessary that, as a first step, the old situation in which His Majesty has no jurisdiction in the Malay States should be remedied. ... A fresh treaty therefore with each Ruler should be concluded as soon as possible after re-occupation under which such jurisdiction would be ceded to His Majesty as would enable him to legislate for the States under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, ... Thereafter it will be possible to proceed to create a new constitution for Malaya by Order-in-Council under statutory powers.*

...

*15. It is recognised that this programme **will require the sacrifice by the State Rulers** of some part of the authority and jurisdiction hitherto exercised by them. **The interests of Malaya as a whole clearly require such a sacrifice.** But there is no intention that the Rulers should lose their personal position as the natural leaders of their Malay people within their State territories. Indeed the association of their territories in the Union will give the Rulers an opportunity to play their part in a wider sphere of affairs, for it is intended to devise means to associate the Rulers personally with the machinery of the central authority, possibly **as an advisory body to the Governor in respect of Malay and Mohammedan affairs.** In any event, **our past obligations will require that the elaboration of the new constitutional arrangements should have regard to the political, economic and social interests of the Malay race.***

Although the proposition was articulated as having noble intentions for a more efficient governance structure, as well as giving equal participation and ownership to non-Malay communities, the British were also concerned about implementing the plan without unnecessary opposition from the Malay Sultans. Furthermore, this was positioned as a “necessary ... first step” that “should be remedied” on the part of the British, and thus required the Malay Sultans to sacrifice their individual and collective political power as traditional Malay rulers for “the interests of Malaya as a whole”.

Of particular significance is Britain’s “past obligations” to the “interests of the Malay race”. First, by re-emphasising their role as protector of the Malay race, the British justified their MU

proposal as it would benefit the Malays through the modernisation of a pan-Malayan governance structure. Second, while seeking to “remedy” the various regimes, the British were careful in keeping the Malay Sultans as intermediaries of “the Malay race”. Thus, in one brilliant stroke, the Malay Sultans could be persuaded that they still kept their State Ruler statuses, although in reality their spheres of influence would be limited to affairs related to Malay religion and customs. This meant that the British could fulfil their “Malay protector” obligations, yet at the same time offer expanded participation rights to the non-Malay communities.

The British presented the MU proposals individually to the Malay Sultans in haste before opposition could develop.<sup>20</sup> The MU came into effect on 1 April 1946 and incorporated all the states of British Malaya except Singapore.<sup>21</sup> Following strong opposition from the Malays, spearheaded by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and other groups,<sup>22</sup> MU was replaced by the Federation of Malaya (hereafter “Malaya”) on 1 February 1948. Under this framework, the Sultans retained sovereignty in their respective states, while Penang<sup>23</sup> and Malacca<sup>24</sup> were administered as British territories. Singapore, with its predominantly ethnic Chinese population, was excluded from the Federation and governed as a separate British colony for two strategic reasons: firstly, to protect Singapore’s strategic and economic significance; and secondly, to counter the fear of Chinese communist terrorism if the Chinese became an ethnic majority in the greater MU polity (see Ryan, 1976).

### 4.3 Colonial Legacies

The period from the 1940s to 1957 – which coincided with the end phase of British colonial rule and the transition towards Malaya’s independence – is crucial to understand the making of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus, and the subsequent culture of migration affecting mobile Malaysians’ citizenship and migration practices. I will not be presenting a chronological

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<sup>20</sup> This must also be contextualised to the British colonial administration’s interrogation and assessment of the Malay Sultans’ activities and allegiances during the Japanese occupation, which is tied to the Sultans’ allowances subsequently given by the British (BMA, 1945). The Sultan of Johore’s request for sea passage to the UK for health reasons was only approved *after* he signed the treaty (SACSEA, 1945).

<sup>21</sup> Singapore was excluded in consideration of its Chinese majority “which would make it difficult of assimilation into any Pan-Malayan Union” (Colonial Office, 1943), as well as its strategic position for imperial defence (Stockwell, 1984).

<sup>22</sup> Including Pusat Tenaga Ra’ayat (PUTERA) and All-Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA), which collectively submitted a “People’s Constitutional Proposals” for Malaya in 1947 (see PUTERA & AMCJA, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> “Pulau Pinang” today.

<sup>24</sup> “Melaka” today.



description of key events. Instead, I focus on specific themes exacerbated, congealed and institutionalised by the British colonial administration. I argue that these themes – firstly, the materialisation of race; secondly, how Western/British education became a form of aspiration; and thirdly, the introduction of foreign concepts of citizenship, electoral representation and the nation-state – ultimately became legacies inherited by the post-colonial Malaysian state that were subsequently built upon and institutionalised from 1957 until the present.

#### **4.3.1 Materialising Race**

##### **Immigration and Ethnic Composition**

British colonial intervention was initially mercantile – the SS, for example, were positioned as “cosmopolitan trade centres” (Bedlington, 1978, p. 30), while tin-mining and plantation industries developed in the Malay States. To meet the demands of a cheap, efficient and reliable labour force, the British systematised labour immigration, especially from China and India. The Chinese first arrived in response to the tin-mining industries in Perak and Selangor, followed by the opening-up of gambier and pepper plantations in Johor and Singapore. Eventually, the Chinese became owners of commercial tin-mining, rubber plantations, and manufacturing factories. They also owned the bulk of the shipping and retail trade. The increase in Chinese immigrant labour grew to such an extent that the Malayan Government enacted the Immigration Restriction Ordinance in 1928, and used this to implement a monthly quota on adult Chinese male immigrants.<sup>25</sup>

The Indians were initially brought to Malaya by the British as convicts and indentured immigrants to work on public work constructions. They were also recruited by private rubber plantation owners through the *kangany* system.<sup>26</sup> In 1907, the Malayan Government passed the Tamil Immigration Fund Ordinance to promote immigration of Indian labour. The fund was initially used to finance the transportation of Indian immigrant labours. From 1908 to 1914, the fund was expanded to cover local transport and quarantine fees. This resulted in significant increases in assisted Indian immigration into Malaya, and especially to the FMS (**Figure 4.2**).

Unlike the Chinese and Indian immigrants who came as sojourners to accumulate wealth before returning to their respective countries, the Malays were farmers and were preoccupied with activities of their farms. Thus, they were employed in seasonal clearing of land for

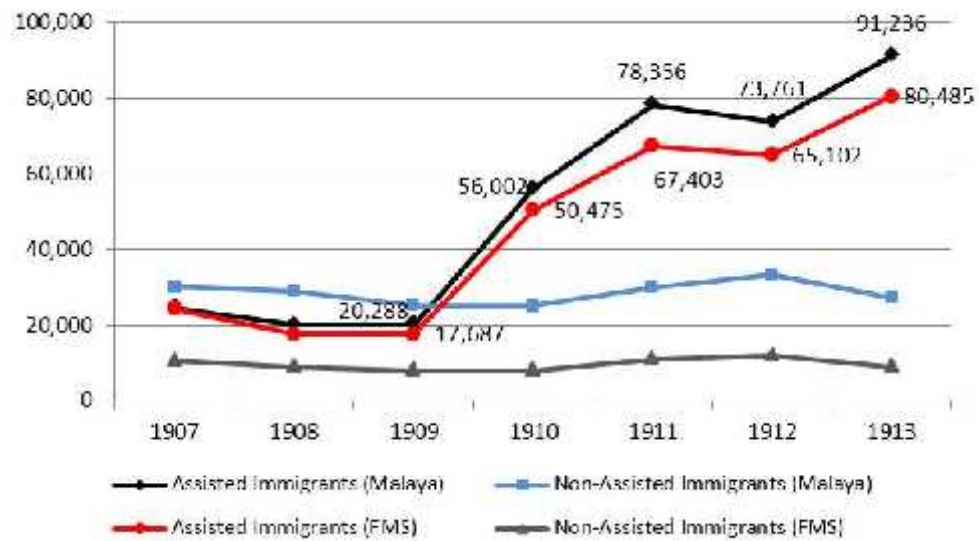
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<sup>25</sup> Chinese women and children below twelve years of age were not subjected to such quotas. In May 1938, quotas were imposed on alien Chinese women immigrants (Saw, 1963).

<sup>26</sup> The *kangany* is an immigrant labour who acts as a recruitment agent for the plantation owner.

plantations, and were not seen as members of a regular labour force. European and Chinese investors and entrepreneurs continued to turn to indentured labour from China and Indian to meet labour demands. By 1901, there were dramatic changes to the population composition in the FMS (**Table 4.4**). By 1921, the Malay population was only 54% of the total population, and this further dipped to 49.2% in 1931 (Mariappan, 2002, p. 203). In contrast, the proportions of the Chinese and Indian population increased, especially between 1911 and 1941 (**Figure 4.3**).

**Figure 4.2: Indian Immigrants to Malaya and the FMS, 1907-1913**



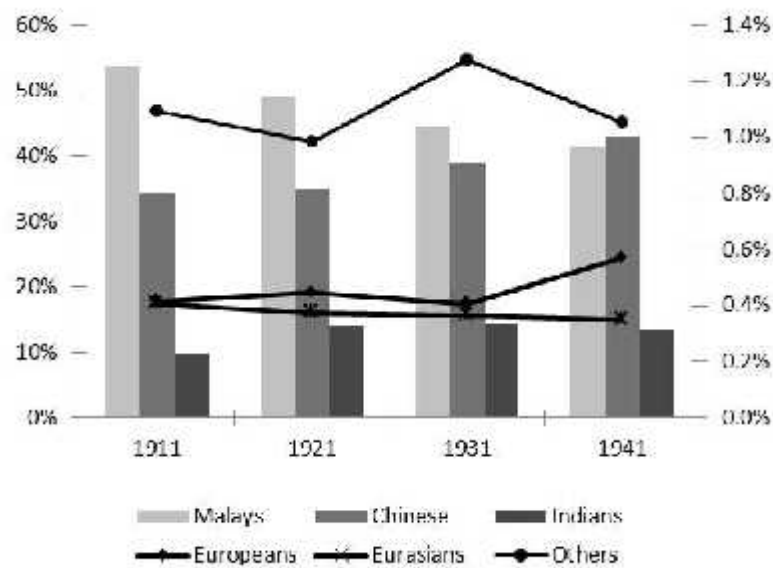
Source: Jackson (1961, p. 120)

**Table 4.4: Increase in Population in the Federated Malay States, 1891-1901**

	Number	Increase (%)
Malays*	312,456	34.9
Europeans	1,422	98.3
Eurasians	1,522	169.8
Chinese	299,739	83.4
Indians	58,211	188.8

\* Including some 20,000 aborigines

Source: Bedlington (1978, Table 1)

**Figure 4.3: Ethnic Composition of the Population of Malaya, 1911-1941****Notes:**

1. "Malays" include other indigenous races of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago.
2. "Europeans" include all white races.

Source: Purcell (1967, p. Appendix III)

**"Divide-and-Rule"**

To curb labour strikes and to ensure business continuity, the British practised the strategy of "divide-and-rule" by creating social and political distance between different groups. This strategy confined and stereotyped ethnic groups to specific economic and political activities (Hefner, 2001). The Europeans were managers; the Chinese initially as labour in the tin-mining industry; the Indians in the rubber estates; and the Malays in agriculture. A dual system of government was created to administer policies towards the Malay and Chinese. For example, Malays were employed in higher government ranks while Chinese were employed in lower ranks as clerks, surveyors and interpreters. Also, a Chinese Protectorate was set up in Singapore in 1877 as a formal means of dealing with the Chinese.

Furthermore, the British pursued "manipulation through ideology" by "playing off one [immigrant] group against the other" (Abraham, 1983, p. 24). For example, plantation owners shared advice on how this could be done (quoted in Jackson, 1961, p. 104):

*To secure your independence, work with Javanese and Tamils and, if you have sufficient experience, also with Malays and Chinese; you can then always play the one against the other ... In case of a strike, you will never be left without labour, and the coolies of one nationality will think twice before they make their terms, if they know that you are in a position that you can do without them.*

This was also to prevent potential political uprising if a particular group outnumbered another group, or the British themselves.

### **Racial Stereotypes**

*Although many of the outward forms of racist thinking have been eliminated from census classification in the post-Independence era, the residue of racial ideology continues to haunt contemporary Malaysia.*

Hirschman (1987, p. 570)

Parallel to the British-led systemised labour immigration and the “divide-and-rule” strategy in Malaya, there was also a broader development of colonial and anthropological knowledge. The advent of social Darwinism saw the preoccupation with “scientific” and “objective” explanations of social behaviour through racial categories. Following the belief in “the white man’s burden”, the British perceived themselves and the Europeans to be superior over the local Malayan peoples. Furthermore, “scholarly” anthropological studies of peoples were influenced by their relative positions vis-à-vis British colonial mercantile interests in Malaya.

Thus, the Malays were conceived and portrayed as docile, lazy and contented; the Chinese viewed with grudging admiration for their entrepreneurialism; and the Indians a “source of cheap and docile labor” (Hirschman, 1986, p. 347). These attitudes in turn influenced how each group viewed each other. Over time, they came to “have a life of their own” (Hirschman, 1986, p. 357) and became legitimised by Malay and non-Malay leaders in the post-colonial period. These divisions also transcend to “all sorts of imagined and real attributes” (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 1998, p. 137) in the peoples’ everyday lives. These include perceptions that the Chinese are “dirty,<sup>27</sup> cunning and deceitful”, while the Malays are “lazy, naïve and incompetent” (Wilson, 1967, p. vi).

This belief in racial categorisation was also extended to census categorisation. The category “Malay”, for example, conflated sub-ethnicities of Javanese, Sumatran, Rawa, Achenese, Minangkabau, and Bugis. Neither were the Chinese dialect and clan identities (e.g. Cantonese, Hokkien, Hylam, Teo-Chiew, etc.) nor the Indians’ caste and sub-ethnicities (e.g. Bengali, Hindustani, Malayali, Tamil, Telugu, etc.) reflected in these official categories. Eventually, the simplified official racial categories of “Malay”, “Chinese”, “Indian”, and “Eurasian” (**Figure 4.4**) ignored sub-ethnic identities and distinctions within each group. Furthermore, the invention of

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<sup>27</sup> Referring to ritual impurity (i.e. eating pork) and not physical cleanliness (Wilson, 1967, p. 25).

“race” as a way of categorising people – originally for census purposes, but subsequently affecting all other formal and informal dimensions of social life in colonial Malaya – was founded uneasily on Eurocentric concepts which did not reflect local epistemologies. As Hirschman (1987, p. 565) notes:

*The problem is that [the colonial administrators] could not define “race” except in terms of the popular images held by Europeans. It is not that Asians lacked criteria for social differentiation but that they tended to use criteria that differed from European perceptions.*

Thus, race evolved from an arbitrary category – devised completely from British colonial perspectives – to a “real” feature. One’s race became associated with assumptions about one’s characteristics, behaviours, economic activity, and relative position in the colonial social hierarchy. As Abraham (1983, p. 20) puts it:

*... colonial ideology intensified and generalized a whole set of stereotypes, based on ethnic or racial criteria, which inculcated feelings of superiority and inferiority among, and between, groups.*

**Figure 4.4: Photograph of Boys Representing Four Races**



*Caption: “Close-up of Indian, Eurasian, Chinese and Malay boys.”*

Source: Unknown photographer (1962)

This racial ideology and stereotyping became exacerbated in political terms in postwar Malaya, as the British started preparing the colony towards independence. In other words, the racial strategy – initially introduced and practised to advance British colonial interests – planted the seeds of economic and political disparity between different ethnic groups *and* racial

hierarchies that would eventually influence Malaysia's subsequent nation-building and national development policies.

### **The Myth of Malay Indigeneity**

*The Malays have given the peninsula its name and its lingua franca, but they are neither its original nor its most numerous inhabitants.*

Ardizzone (1946, p. 17)

*Although it is usual to think of the Malays as having an immemorial title to Malaya it must be remembered that immigration from the Indonesian Archipelago has continued to the present day and that a very considerable proportion of the present Malay population is made up of immigrants who were themselves born elsewhere or whose forebears came to Malaya only in the last few decades. In contrast to the other immigrant races which have come to Malaya in recent times, the Malaysians – a term used to embrace the Malays both of the mainland and of the surrounding islands – tend to settle in the country permanently and to become members of the established Malay population.*

Emerson (1937, p. 16)

As I mentioned in **Section 4.1.1**, migration has been common within the Malay Archipelago. Malay immigration to Peninsula Malaysia started with the arrival of immigrants from Sumatra, Java and other islands in the region since the Sri Vijaya empire. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Bugis immigrants from the southern port of Celebes arrived in Malacca, then under Portuguese and Dutch rule. By the mid-1600s, Minangkabau immigrants, who are skilled agriculturalists, had settled in Malacca, Naning, Ramban, Sungei Ujong, Klang (Saw, 1963). In the 18th century, an independent Minangkabau state of Negri Sembilan was established.

Over time, the Malay immigrants came to be indistinguishable from the indigenous Malays through inter-marriages and assimilation. This was also facilitated by their linguistic, cultural and religious affinities with the indigenous Malays. As Groves (1962, p. 1) notes, “those who have chosen to adopt the Malay language and Mohameddan religion tend to become absorbed readily into the Malay community”. Winstedt (1943, p. 97) also notes that a history of “immigration of racial kindred” resulted in the Malays becoming “the only permanent population that look upon the country as their native land”. Indeed, the 1931 census recorded that one in six Malays were not native-born (Department of Information, 1953, p. 11). However, as Malay immigrants settled in the various Malay sultanates, they saw themselves as “natives”, similar to the indigenous Malays.

On the one hand, there is a natural process of “indigenisation” as Malay immigrants settled and *became* Malay natives over time. On the other hand, I argue that the British colonial period *facilitated, encouraged and institutionalised* the myth of Malay indigeneity. In other words, British colonialism *made real* and *legitimised* the “truth” of Malay indigeneity. This homogenised the Malays by giving them “historical and racial ownership” (Manickam, 2009, p. 604). Furthermore, the myth of the naïve Malay needing protection against the “intruding immigrants” legitimised British intervention in the Malay States.

This myth of Malay indigeneity materialised in three interrelated ways. First, colonial historiographers used the term *Tanah Melayu* (lit. “the Malay land”) synonymously with the Peninsula. This turned the term *Melayu* into a “national and territorial identity concept” (Holst, 2012, p. 34). Second, Malay – or *Melayu* – was formalised as an indigenous ethnic identity in the colonial census. For example, while Malays, Achinese, Boyanese, Bugis and other ethnic groups were distinguished as separate ethnic categories in the 1871 and 1881 SS census, they were grouped together with Aborigines and Dyaks<sup>28</sup> under “Malays and other natives of the Archipelago” in the 1891 census (see Hirschman, 1987). Thus, the ethnic category “Malay” was expanded to include peoples of various ethnic and indigenous origins in the region.

Third, the British assisted in the constitution of Malay Reservations Enactments to protect Malay land rights in the Malay States in the 1930s (see Bashiran Begum Mobarak Ali & Nor Asiah Mohamad, 2007). This was in part due to problems of land dispossession brought about by British-encouraged labour immigration – particularly of the enterprising Chinese immigrants. It was perceived that “[t]he most serious danger to the Malays is ... from Chinese penetration”, and that the “hardworking and energetic” Malay “is unable to stand the competition of the more industrious and thrifty Chinese” (Haynes, 1931). In one stroke, the land reservation enactments confirmed and legitimised the Malays’ native land rights.

Here, there are two interesting points of note with respect to Malay indigeneity. First, the Kedah Malay Reservations Enactment of 1349 (Hijri calendar) defines Malay as “a person belonging to any Malayan race or a person of Arab descent who habitually speaks the Malay language or any Malayan language and professes the Muslim religion” (Government of Kedah, 1931). This definition raises questions about the *constitutional* criteria for indigeneity: is it by virtue of race/ethnicity, culture, language, religion, or native birth right? Second, Abraham (1997, pp. 3-4) makes this observation:

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<sup>28</sup> Also known as Dayaks.

*It is nonetheless significant that immigration from Indonesia should have been highest in those states that were under British rule. This suggests that as in the case of Chinese immigration, British colonial administration offered better incentives to Indonesian immigrants when compared to other native administrations in the area. It is also significant that British rule in the Malay states should have been in areas where the local Malay element was least when compared to the other states which had received Indonesian immigrants. This also suggests that for the native population as a whole, whatever 'benefits' which might have resulted from British colonial rule did not necessarily accrue to the indigenous Malay population.*

Thus, while the British constructed the myth of Malay indigeneity, this may not necessarily translate into material acknowledgement for the *real* indigenous Malays. Nevertheless, the myth of Malay indigeneity and their helplessness in the face of competition from immigrants enabled the British to play the role of Malay protectors. This served to legitimise British intervention and ownership over Malaya. As Koh (2008, p. 27) puts it:

*This infantilization of the Malay was a key rhetorical move to allow the British to see themselves as legitimate "Malay Protectors" – and to at the same time racialize and demonize the other "intruders" – the Chinese and Indian immigrants, who were ironically enough attracted to the region precisely because of the British.*

### **The Malayan Emergency**

*[The Emergency] cast its shadow over everything: race relations, economic recovery, the collapse of the Malayan Union, the separation of Singapore from the peninsula, the Malayanization of the public services, the quickening of political awareness.*

Heussler (1983, p. 143)

The social stratification of the Malayan population along racial/ethnic lines was further exacerbated during the Malayan Emergency. This period, from 16 June 1948 to 12 July 1960, saw the British armed forces fighting a guerrilla war with the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), the military arm of the Malay Communist Party (MCP). Although the MNLA refers to this as the Anti-British National Liberation War (Caldwell, 1977), i.e. an *anti-colonial* struggle,<sup>29</sup> from the British perspective this was a communist *terrorist* problem.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the British used the term "emergency" instead of "war". This was because losses sustained by British-owned rubber plantations and tin mining industries would not have been covered by London insurers otherwise.

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<sup>29</sup> Short (1975) observes that this was part of the regional nationalist struggle for independence.

<sup>30</sup> The adoption of counter-terror strategy by the British against civilians during the Emergency has been a controversial topic (Bennett, 2009; Short, 2010). The killing of 24 "suspects" by British soldiers, known as the Batang Kali Massacre, remains an unresolved issue today (*The Guardian*, 2012b; 2012c).



Parallel to this was a “squatter” problem that developed following the depression of the 1930s. Forced to seek alternative livelihoods, many non-repatriating Chinese contract immigrant labourers moved to the jungle fringes and became illegal land occupiers (see Colonial Office, 1952c). They were, however, left with no choice but to do so due to pro-Malay land alienation policies. The government’s construction of this as an *illegal land occupation problem* legitimised the forced resettlement of “squatters”. Recommendations were put forth to introduce limited-tenure land titles “as a form of probationary title for a period during which it can be decided whether the person concerned is settling down as a proper citizen of the country and intends to give his loyalty to the local administration” (Malaya, 1949b, p. 6).

Under the Briggs Plan, the British implemented large-scale “squatter” resettlement in Malaya.<sup>31</sup> A total of 573,000 persons, of which the majority were rural Chinese “squatters”, were relocated to more than 600 gated and guarded New Villages during the Emergency (Sandhu, 1973). The establishment of these New Villages served three purposes: firstly, to prevent villagers from providing food, supplies and intelligence to the communist members; secondly, to monitor communist activities and to curb recruitment of villagers into the communist party; and thirdly, to ensure the safety of rural populations from communist warfare.

However, “squatter” resettlement was only a guise for British counter-insurgency. Kua (2011, p. 81) describes these New Villages as “no more than concentration camps with high barbed-wired fences, heavily-armed police guards, curfews, and other prohibitive regulations.” Following the enactment of the Emergency Regulations 17FA in August 1950, any area could be declared a “controlled area” where “in effect, any person who when called upon fails to stop and submit to search may be shot” (Gurney, British High Commissioner, quoted in French, 2011, p. 85). Furthermore, surprise operations were conducted where all persons in the areas were arrested and detained, only to be released and resettled where there were “insufficient grounds to justify individual operations under Emergency Regulation 17(1)” (Colonial Office, 1952b, p. 5).

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<sup>31</sup> Before the Briggs Plan, suspects were either detained or repatriated to their original countries. Out of 400,000 estimated “squatters”, 40,000 were detained, of which 26,000 were repatriated (24,000 Chinese, and 2,000 Indians and Indonesians) (quoted in Zhou, 2008, p. 25). By 1955, 31,245 persons have been deported, mainly to China (French, 2011, p. 110).

The Emergency resulted in three outcomes pertaining to the materialisation of race in Malaya.<sup>32</sup> First, because 95% of the communists were Chinese (Carnell, 1952, p. 511), the Chinese became equated with, and thus criminalised as “terrorists”. Furthermore, while the British administration internally acknowledged Malay and Indian involvement in the MNLA, this was not publicly acknowledged for communalist considerations (see Kua, 2011, pp. 82-83). Instead, communalist politics were deliberately used as a strategy to counter “communist terrorists”. Besides reinforcing racial stereotypes introduced by the British in the first place, this also strained Malay-Chinese communal relations. This would subsequently impact on the Federation of Malaya citizenship negotiations (see **Section 4.3.3**), as well as the linking of Malaysian citizenship with one’s identity card (I/C) due to the need for national registration and regulation of citizenship acquisition in the early years of Malaysia’s independence. Another significant outcome pertaining to citizenship and the securitisation of “race” is the constitution of the Internal Security Act (ISA) (see **Section 5.2.2**).

Second, because of the need to organise the logistics of resettlement – especially in terms of liaison with Chinese “squatters”<sup>33</sup> – the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), formed in 1948, came to be the default political party representing the interests of the Chinese community in Malaya. This would eventually lead to race-based political representation and coalition in Malaysian politics (see **Section 4.3.3**). Third, because the British solution to counter-insurgency was large-scale relocation and consolidation of rural settlements, this resulted in further race-based geographical segregation. In effect, this deepened the existing Malay-Chinese divide by creating New Villages as isolated, counter-insurgency *Chinese* settlements. Furthermore, because communication and commercial exchange was cut off, this resulted in the creation of three race-based agrarian economies (Tilman, 1964, p. 34).

#### **4.3.2 Education as Aspiration**

##### **Education System**

*In the traditional setting of a nineteenth century Malay State, education may be described as generally diffused, informal and differentiated. ... Upward social mobility through education was then a virtually non-existent phenomenon.*

Loh (1975, p. 12)

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<sup>32</sup> See Wang (1988) for development implications; and Voon (2009) for demographic implications. For ethnographic studies, see Loh (1988) for socio-economic implications; Strauch (1981) for local politics; and Zhou (2008) for cultural and ecological consequences.

<sup>33</sup> French (2011, p. 120) notes that half the Chinese population were resettled, making this a “massive demographic dislocation”.

Prior to the British colonial period, education in Malaya mainly took the form of informal passing down of traditional life skills from parents or through apprenticeships. “Formal” Malay education took the form of Quran schools, which were conducted in a village house, the *surau* (lit. “prayer house”), or *pondok* (lit. “hut”) schools.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, informal Chinese “old-style” schools, modelled after existing schools in China, taught Chinese classics in ancestral halls, temple precincts, or residences of a local leader. Following reformation and modernisation of Chinese schools in China, “modern-style” Chinese schools were introduced in Malaya from 1903 onwards. These schools were typically financed by Chinese clan associations. Unlike the Chinese community, the Tamil community did not have resources and the social networks to set up their own vernacular schools. In 1900, state funds were provided for Anglo-Tamil Christian missionary schools.

The British colonial government introduced secular Malay schools in the SS in the 1860s, followed by the FMS in the 1870s. English schools were sparingly introduced into the Malay States during the 1880s. These were typically run by missionaries and located in urban areas where the majority of student enrolment was from the non-Malay immigrant population. The Malays were reluctant to enrol their children in English schools as they were sceptical and fearful of conversion to an alien faith (Federation of Malaya, 1951, p. 8). Furthermore, the British were reluctant to “teach English indiscriminately” (see Loh, 1975, p. 15) for fear of creating enlightened masses who would be discontented with their labouring lives.<sup>35</sup> Instead, emphasis was placed on promoting Malay primary vernacular education, as expressed in the annual report by the Chief Secretary of the FMS (Maxwell, 1921, p. 13):

*... the aim of the Government is not to turn out a few well-educated youths, nor yet number of less well-educated boys; rather it is to improve the bulk of the people and to make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had been, and a man whose education will enable him to understand how his own lot in life fits in with the scheme of life around him.*

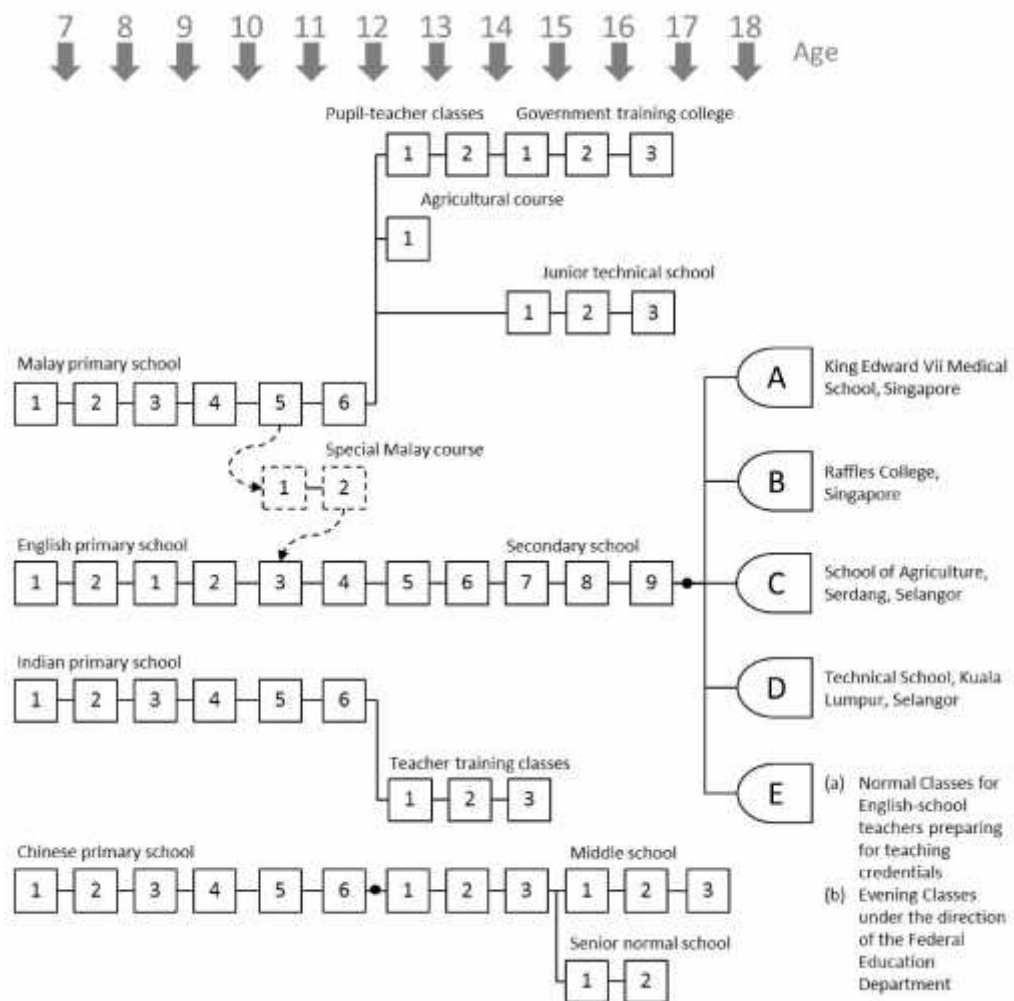
Increasing commercial activities in Malaya meant that there was a demand for English education for employment in business and government. This saw an expansion of English schools, first in the SS, followed by the FMS. In 1886, an annual scholarship later known as the Queen’s Scholarship enabled a local student from the English schools in the SS to attend university in Great Britain (Malayan Union, 1947). In 1890, a Raja’s School was established in

<sup>34</sup> Residential schools where a few dozen boys lived and studied with a well-known Quran teacher.

<sup>35</sup> Policies and experiences in British India were carried over and thought to be applicable to Malaya (see Loh, 1975). Interestingly, it was noted in the 1890s that it was desirable for the Chinese to acquire English knowledge since they “form so important an element of the settled and of the moving population in the Straits and the Native States” (Treacher, 1892, p. 20).

Selangor for boys from the Selangor royalty and aristocracy. In 1894, the school was closed and the students were enrolled in major English schools within the state, or in England (Loh, 1975, p. 19). In 1893, a major English school, the Victoria Institution, was established in Kuala Lumpur. A two-year special Malay bridging course was introduced for students who have completed four years of education in Malay primary schools to enter the English education stream.

**Figure 4.5: Education System in the Federated Malay States, 1930s**



Source: Adapted from Loh (1975, p. 136)

In the early stages of colonial rule – and broadly following the “divide-and-rule” strategy – the British adopted a dual approach towards education in Malaya. On the one hand, the British were obliged to fulfil their responsibility to the Malay natives (including the mass population and the aristocracy). On the other hand, the British adopted a *laissez-faire* and non-

interventionist approach towards non-Malay vernacular education.<sup>36</sup> The specific details of this dual approach would develop and morph in accordance to changing socio-political circumstances.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the British did not actively intervene in vernacular education until 1920. Thus, in pre-war Malaya there were four separate education systems (**Figure 4.5**): first, English schools preparing “commoner” students for jobs as English-educated clerks, and “elite” students for further education in England; second, Malay schools providing basic education; third, Chinese vernacular schools; and fourth, Indian vernacular schools.

After the 1911 Revolution in China, Chinese education in Malaya and the surrounding region became caught up in Kuomintang revolutionary politics in China. The schools were staffed by teachers trained in China, and became sites for propagating overseas Chinese nationalism. In 1920, the British introduced the Registration of Schools Enactment which required registration and inspection of schools in the SS and FMS. A grants-in-aid scheme for Chinese vernacular schools was also introduced. In effect, these accorded the British legal powers to intervene in the administration and development of Chinese schools. During the Emergency, government-aided Chinese primary schools were established in New Villages, arising from the concern for the government to “maintain some degree of subsequent control until social cohesion had been attained” (Colonial Office, 1952a).

### **English Education, the Malay Elite and the Civil Service**

By the early 1900s, English education has been established as a means for securing white collar jobs in the commercial and government sector. As Khasnor Johan (1984, pp. 3-4) notes, “an English education increasingly provided a new criterion of, and passport to, social distinction.” However, the British government was reluctant to provide large-scale English education for the masses. This was evident in the policy for education in the FMS (quoted in Winstedt, 1928):

*It is the policy of the Government to provide education in English for boys whose parents can afford to pay schools fees, provided that the number of boys attending these schools is fixed with regard to the available sources of employment open to boys with an English education. The demands of parents for an education in English for their sons are in excess of the rate at which they can be absorbed into suitable employment, and the Government therefore is compelled to resist the demand by the parents for that education and to be guided by the supply of employment for the boys.*

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<sup>36</sup> This was evident in the documenting of Malay, English and Anglo Tamil schools in the Perak Annual Reports, with an obvious absence of documentation of non-Malay vernacular schools.

<sup>37</sup> For example, the period 1916 to 1921 saw a new orientation towards Malay vernacular education. In 1917, R.O. Winstedt was commissioned to review the Malay vernacular education. Following his report, the Sultan Idris Training College was established in 1922 to provide three-year teacher training for Malay teachers.

The issue of Malay employment in the civil service arose in 1902 during the second Conference of Rulers. Existing historical studies (Khasnor Johan, 1984; Loh, 1975; Stevenson, 1975) provide details of key events and persons in realising the proposal. Suffice to say here that a few interrelated issues facilitated the establishment of an elite Malay education system with the sole purpose of transitioning sons of the Malay aristocracy into the colonial civil service. First, the British colonial administration realised the need for an intermediary governing class to mitigate between the British administrators and the Malay subjects. Second, increasing costs of running the British colonial administration with recruits from Britain and British India created the need for a more sustainable solution – i.e. local recruitment. Third, this offered an opportunity to demonstrate British moral obligation to the improvement and development of the Malay community – especially towards eventual self-government. Fourth, this offered an opportunity to pacify the Malay sultans (who were beginning to feel the loss of their ruler statuses to the British advisors) by enabling their scions to enter into governmental roles.<sup>38</sup>

The Malay Residential School at Kuala Kangsar was thus established in 1905. The school, later referred to as the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), was modelled after the English public school. Emphasis was placed on the building of character, the understanding of important ideals of the English middle class, as well as ways and habits of the Englishman as preparation for students' future careers with their British counterparts. The College later became known as the "Eton of the East". However, an equal emphasis was also placed on Malay education. Khasnor Johan (1984, p. 43) notes that

*... the desired product [of the MCKK] was a Malay who was able to fit himself into the British dominated bureaucracy and adapt himself to work with British colleagues. At the same time he was not to be so Anglicized that he became ineffective as an intermediary between Malay society and the British.*

In other words, the MCKK graduate is to become an intermediary bureaucrat – an important role the British could not undertake, but yet considered inferior to the "proper" English gentleman.

The emphasis on "proper" education for the Malay aristocracy needs to be understood in the broader context of British colonial attitudes towards the Malays. As I have mentioned earlier, the British assisted in the construction of Malay indigeneity which legitimised their role as protectors of the Malay race. Through contact with the Malays, the British found them to be "nature's gentlemen". Thus, the push for a public school education for the Malay aristocracy

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<sup>38</sup> By late-1940s, an established path for sons of Malay sultans was: "Malay School: Malay College: Public School (England if possible): University, law school or possibly even the Army for a spell – then back to Malaya, with the idea of taking some part in the State's affairs, which will train him for more responsible duties in the future" (Unknown author, 1949).

was also in line with the observation that the Malay culture held similar values to that of the British society.<sup>39</sup> The distinct ruler-subject social hierarchy in Malay society was a familiar parallel to the social class structures in pre-Industrial England. Thus, the establishment of the MCKK further reinforced the dichotomous division between aristocracy and the masses in Malayan society.

In 1910, the British introduced the Higher Subordinate Class Scheme, later known as the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) in the FMS. The MAS was a scheme for junior subordinates to the more prestigious Malayan Civil Service (MCS). Recruitment into the MAS came almost exclusively from the MCKK graduates. Over time, this created a new Malay elite class – an English-educated Malay aristocracy with positions in the prestigious civil service. This emergent class would eventually play a critical brokering role in negotiations towards Malaysia's independence.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 4.5: Employment in Government Service, January 1927 to mid-1929**

Government Department	Category	% of Malay Applicants Appointed	% of Non-Malay Applicants Appointed
Railway	Clerks	33.5%	17.2%
Railway	Overseers	7.7%	7.8%
Electrical	Technical Subordinates	30.0%	15.1%
Survey	Technical Subordinates	62.9%	16.2%
Public Works	Technical Subordinates	50.0%	31.7%
Posts & Telegraphs	Technical Subordinates	55.5%	45.7%
Posts & Telegraphs	Clerks	21.1%	21.1%

Source: Loh (1975, p. 86)

The MAS recruited only Malays (especially Malay aristocrats), while the MCS was closed to non-Malay Asians.<sup>41</sup> However, the lower ranks of government service were open to both Malays and non-Malays. Although the British administration employed Malays wherever possible, this was not based on any official quota or preferential rules. Thus, there was no

<sup>39</sup> Allen (1970), through his careful analysis of the Oxbridge and “gentlemanly” backgrounds of many of the British MCS officers, suggests that this “Malayophilia”, i.e. a “general admiration of an entire race” (p. 173), became indoctrinated into the MCS.

<sup>40</sup> Stockwell (1984, p. 84) notes that during the 1950s, the British switched gears to lead Malaya “from empire to commonwealth by transferring power to leaders who would command local support and serve British interests”.

<sup>41</sup> In 1921, a new scheme liberalised entry into the MAS to Malay commoners and speeded up promotion of MAS officers into the MCS (see Yeo, 1980). It was stipulated that four-fifths of new recruits must be Malays. Heussler (1983, pp. 208-209) notes that by 1952 twenty Malays were recruited into the MCS annually; by 1955, there were 122 Malays and 222 expatriates in the MCS.

obvious pattern in the employment of Malays and non-Malays, at least in the late 1920s (**Table 4.5**). Nevertheless, the “closed” and “protected” (Khasnor Johan, 1984) nature of the MAS and MCS meant that civil service jobs were accorded with prestige due to the exclusive nature of its recruitment and ethos.

More importantly, the MCKK and the MAS created a Malay civil service elite class, who would go on to play significant roles in Malaysia’s pre- and post-independence political negotiations and policymaking. Puthucheary (1978, pp. 31-34), for example, makes three important observations: first, all six Malays representing the rulers and UMNO in the Anglo-Malay Working Committee (see **Section 4.3.3**) were civil servants; second, 51 out of the 103 Malay candidates who contested in the 1955 federal elections were ex-civil servants, with 80% of UMNO candidates being ex-civil servants; and third, Malaya’s first and second prime ministers retired from public service to enter politics. The British had thus assisted in the creation and nurturing of the Malay political elite, with long-lasting effects in post-colonial Malaysia.

### **Overseas Education and Scholarships**

A parallel development was the introduction of scholarship schemes. Early schemes were initially introduced in the 1890s to enable students to study in government English schools. The scholarships were offered to selected Malay students who had completed four years of primary Malay education in vernacular schools to enter two-year Special Classes before they transit into the English education stream (see **Figure 4.5**). By 1947, a clear Malay-Chinese distinction had emerged: government scholarships were offered to Malay students, while non-Malay students relied on a smaller number of non-government scholarships (**Table 4.6**).

**Table 4.6: Government Free Places and Scholarships in Malayan Union, 1947**

	Government free places		Government scholarships		Non-government scholarships	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Malay	3,581	35.5%	609	98.5%	31	8.4%
Chinese	4,000	39.6%	6	1.0%	198	54.0%
Indian	1,911	18.9%	2	0.3%	88	24.0%
Eurasian	420	4.2%	1	0.2%	47	12.8%
Others	182	1.8%	0	0.0%	3	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,094</b>		<b>618</b>		<b>367</b>	

*Note: Free places and scholarships constitute 28.6% of total enrolment of 38,731.*

Source: Cheeseman (1948)



Subsequently, government scholarships were awarded to encourage overseas higher education. In 1886, the prestigious Queen's Scholarship was initiated and supported selected students to pursue university degrees in Britain. Each year, two Queen's Scholarships and one Queen's Fellowship was awarded. In keeping with British pro-Malay policy, one of the Queen's Scholarships was reserved for Malays annually, while the Queen's Fellowship was reserved for Malays every alternate year. The prestigious and competitive nature of the scholarship is evident in the selection procedures. First, candidates were selected based on academic results in the Senior Cambridge examination, as well as recommendations from their schoolmasters. Second, candidates must be qualified to study for an Honours degree at the University of Oxford or Cambridge.<sup>42</sup> Because selection was based on academic performance in the English education stream, this meant that students without access to English education were more likely to be excluded from the scholarships.

By the 1940s, other overseas scholarships were made available. These include the Johore Sultan Ibrahim Scholarships (only open to subjects of the Sultan of Johore), the Kedah Government Scholarships, the £1,000,000 Colonial Development and Welfare Scholarships, the Nuffield Foundation Scholarships, the Colonial Social Welfare Scholarships, the Malayan Union Government (Overseas) Scholarships, and the British Council Scholarships (Cheeseman, 1948; Malayan Union, 1947). It is noteworthy that scholars from Malaya took up 10.4% of scholarship funds offered to all British colonies in 1946 to 1948 inclusive, second only to Nigeria (**Table 4.7**). Although overseas students from Malaya were limited in numbers, the UK emerged as a popular destination for both government scholars and privately-funded students (**Table 4.8**).

The preference for British education was further institutionalised and promoted with the establishment of the Kirkby Teacher Training College near Liverpool in 1952. From 1952 to 1962, the College trained about 1,500 teachers and over 300 teacher-trainers from Malaya. Although the purpose of overseas teacher training was initially a short-term "emergency" measure,<sup>43</sup> the outcome was highly significant for Malaysia. Firstly, this institutionalised the importance and legitimacy of British-style education – acquired by the teacher-trainees, and subsequently transplanted into Malaysia's education system.

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<sup>42</sup> For perspective, only 10% of British university places were open to overseas students at that time (Cheeseman, 1948, p. 80).

<sup>43</sup> In a letter to the Department of Education, a Colonial Office official wrote: "We are finding great difficulty in recruiting expatriate teachers for the Malayan Service and, in view of the rapid expansion of the Education Service in that country we find that the only short-term solution is to provide facilities in this country for the training of an appreciable number of teachers" (Keith, 1951).

**Table 4.7: Colonial Development and Welfare Scholarship by Colonies, 1946-1948**

Colony	Amount (£)	% of overall amount
Aden	2,237	1.1
Barbados	5,423	2.7
British Guiana	7,647	3.8
British Honduras	915	0.4
British Somaliland	5,025	2.5
Falkland Islands	580	0.3
Fiji	4,400	2.2
Gambia	2,115	1.0
Gibraltar	555	0.3
Gold Coast	7,775	3.8
Hong Kong	9,837	4.8
Jamaica	10,426	5.1
Kenya	9,865	4.8
Leeward Islands	3,514	1.7
Malaya	21,250	10.4
Malta	1,833	0.9
Mauritius	8,134	4.0
Nigeria	29,756	14.6
Northern Rhodesia	6,775	3.3
Nyasaland	8,265	4.1
Palestine	943	0.5
Sarawak	444	0.2
Sierra Leone	12,170	6.0
Singapore	10,150	5.0
Tanganyika	9,391	4.6
Western Pacific	252	0.1
Trinidad	5,292	2.6
Uganda	8,645	4.2
Windward Islands	4,325	2.1
Zanzibar	3,395	1.7
High Commission Territories	2,244	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>203,578</b>	

Source: Jones (1949)

**Table 4.8: Destinations of Overseas Students, 1947**

	Scholars		Private		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
UK	39	62.9%	52	29.1%	91
India & Ceylon	9	14.5%	23	12.8%	32
China	2	3.2%	20	11.2%	22
Hong Kong	4	6.5%	53	29.6%	57
Australia	4	6.5%	14	7.8%	18
USA	3	4.8%	16	8.9%	19
Canada	0	0.0%	1	0.6%	1
Trinidad	1	1.6%	0	0.0%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>		<b>179</b>		<b>241</b>

Source: Cheeseman (1948)

Secondly, this led to the emergence of an elite Kirkby-educated *educator* class (see Kirkby Reunion, 2013) – much similar to the elite MCKK *bureaucrat* class – who went on to take up key positions in Malaysia’s education system (see *New Straits Times*, 2012). Thirdly, this opened the path for Malaysia’s culture of migration, which I will elaborate in **Chapter 6**. Hence, a British overseas education became something to aspire to. Consequently, graduates from British universities – especially since competitive scholarships were almost the only means towards overseas education – are accorded respect and an assumed higher social status upon their graduation as they return to key positions in the Malaysian civil service.

### **4.3.3 Borders, Sovereignty and Citizenship**

#### **Introducing Citizenship: The Malayan Union (MU) Proposal**

*[C]itizenship legislations in this country [i.e. Malaysia] are extremely difficult to comprehend. The legislations have roots in British nationality laws – in a way this is akin to a tree planted in 1948 but which only gave fruit in 1957 when Malaya gained independence.*

Abas Mohamed Salleh (1988, p. 15, my translation)

The MU proposal is a significant moment in the making of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus. First, it introduced the concept of a federal nation-state, amalgamating disparate territories with diverse social, economic and political characteristics. This radically changed the existing political structure, especially the relationships between the Malay Sultans, their subjects, and the British Advisors/Residents. Second, it introduced a common citizenship to an arbitrary collection of “citizenry” who were unfamiliar with the concept of Western liberal citizenship, let alone democratic representation and voting. This challenged the Malays’ “native” position – a paradox since it was the British who led to the construction of Malay indigeneity and their privileged status vis-à-vis “immigrant” non-Malays.

As a result, negotiations towards institutionalising a nation-state and the *contents of* and *eligibility for* citizenship were extremely complex. Although the MU proposal did not materialise into constitutional law due to strong opposition from the Malays, it was a significant milestone in setting the parameters for subsequent citizenship negotiations. These negotiations took place during three milestones before Malaya attained independence from the British: firstly, MU (1946-1948); secondly, Malaya (1948-1956); and thirdly, independence (1957-1963) (**Table 4.9; Appendix A7**). A fourth moment took place with the inclusion and subsequent expulsion of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia (1963-1965).

The idea of British Malaya as a nation-state started to take form through the MU proposal. The British hoped to wean the Malays from their loyalties to their respective States and Sultans, and other non-Malay communities from their loyalties to their respective homelands (Cheah, 2002, p. 13). With this proposal came the difficult task of institutionalising a MU citizenship. The British articulated this as a noble motivation “to ensure that political rights in the MU shall be extended to all those who regard Malaya as their real home and as the subject of their loyalty” (Malayan Union. Working Committee on the Constitutional Proposals, 1946, p. 23). However, there were complexities in actual implementations.

**Table 4.9: Key Features of Citizenship Laws, 1946-1963**

Political entity	Legislation or Constitution	Key feature or issue of contention
Malayan Union (1 Apr 1946 - 31 Jan 1948)	Malayan Union Order in Council, 1946 <sup>a</sup>	- <b>Common citizenship</b> to all
Federation of Malaya (1 Feb 1948 - 30 Aug 1957)	Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948 <sup>b</sup>	- Federal citizenship that is <b>not a nationality</b> - Did not resolve existing State nationality laws - <b>Defined “Malay”</b>
	Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance, 1952 <sup>c</sup>	- Includes <b>citizens of the UK and Colonies (CUKC)</b> (after enactment of British Nationality Act, 1948) - To be read with separate State Nationality Enactments in the nine Malay States - Provision for <b>women married to Federal citizens</b>
Federation of Malaysia (31 Aug 1957 - 16 Sept 1963)	1957 Constitution <sup>d</sup>	- <b>Unqualified <i>jus soli</i> principle*</b>
	Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1962 <sup>e</sup>	- Provisions for citizenship acquisition by persons in <b>North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore</b> - <b>“Malay” to include “Natives” of the Borneo States</b> - <b>Qualified <i>jus soli</i> principle:</b> only for those born in-territory on or after Malaysia Day

\* Previously the principle was closer to *jus sanguinis*

Sources: Sinnadurai (1978); <sup>a</sup>Colonial Office (1946a, 1946b); <sup>b</sup>Federation of Malaya (1952); <sup>c</sup>Malaya (1958); <sup>d</sup>Hickling (1985, pp. 24-25); <sup>e</sup>Federation of Malaya (1963); Malaysia (1978)

Firstly, citizenship as a concept and legal-political right – as understood in the British context – was alien to Malaya. The Malays, for example, were previously subjects – not citizens – under the Sultan-*rakyat* relationship; while some Chinese and Indians saw themselves as overseas Chinese<sup>44</sup> and Indian nationals respectively. This was also acknowledged by members of the

<sup>44</sup> See Hara (1997) for a historical analysis of how the Malayan Chinese’ identity consciousness shifted from one that is China-oriented to Malaya-oriented. Koon (2006) further shows that the Malayan

British colonial administration. In a letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies on 28 March 1946, Sir William George Maxwell, the Colonial Secretary of the SS, wrote that “[t]he subject of Citizenship and all that it implies is so new to everyone in Malaya” (Maxwell, 1946).

Secondly, the British attempted to create a new political entity with common citizenship by amalgamating various territories that were diverse across social, economic and political spheres (**Figure 4.6**). Thirdly, and consequently, the idea elicited differential reactions from Malaya’s multi-ethnic and political stakeholders. Generally, the Malays were anxious about the loss of their exclusive rights as indigenous natives and reluctant to share common citizenship rights with other groups; local-born Chinese wanted to claim equal entitlement to citizenship on the basis of birthrights; the Ceylonese, who were British subjects, were concerned that their rights in Ceylon were not jeopardised (Colonial Office, 1946d).

The MU citizenship proposal offered two modes of citizenship acquisition: *automatic*, or *by application* (**Appendix A7**). The former was available to anyone born in any British Malaya or Singapore states if they were living there before 15 February 1942;<sup>45</sup> born outside British Malaya or the SS only if their fathers were citizens of the MU; and who reached 18 years old and who had lived in British Malaya or Singapore, 10 out of 15 years before 15 February 1942. The latter was eligible to any interested applicant with good character, fluent in English or Malay, and agreeable to take an oath of allegiance to the MU.

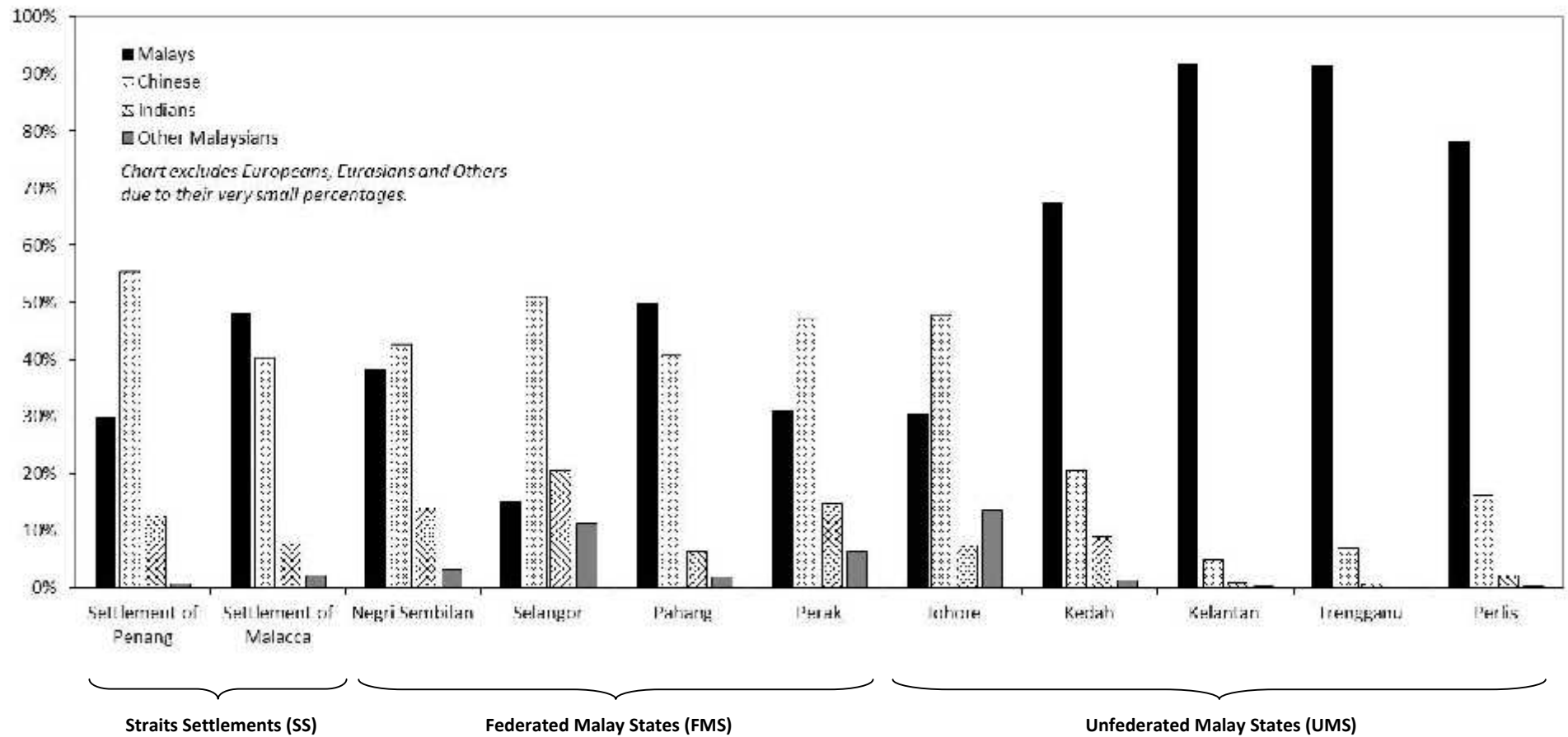
Despite the fact that many Chinese and Indians were locally-born (**Figure 4.7**), they were considered “immigrant” by the Malays who saw themselves as “indigenous natives”. A related contention was that the “immigrants” were not as loyal to Malaya as the Malays. However, Silcock (1961, pp. 11-12) observed that the Chinese held “[varying] degrees of loyalty to Malaya, at the one extreme outdoing Malays in public spirit and local patriotism, and at the other coming [to Malaya] merely to trade and learning no English or Malay”. This shows that the Malays’ perception of questionable loyalty amongst the Chinese were perhaps not entirely accurate. Nevertheless, the belief that only the Malays are indigenous – which I argue is a British colonial legacy – prevailed and fuelled Malay sentiments.

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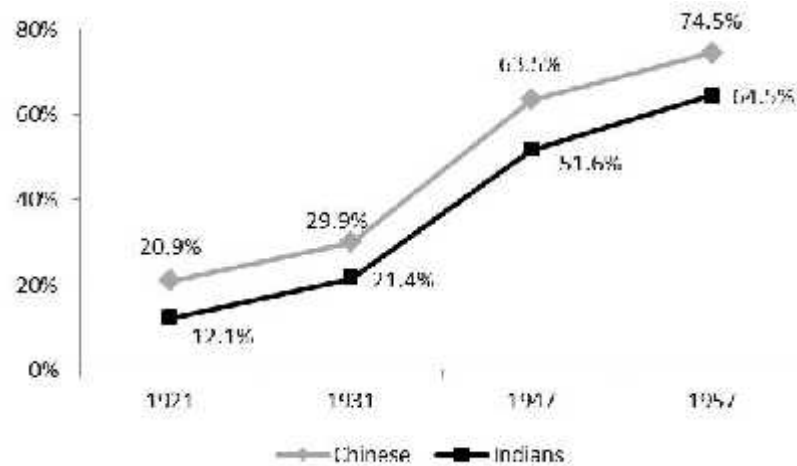
Chinese community faced an identity crisis in reconciling the MU citizenship proposals with their own understanding of nationality.

<sup>45</sup> In 1946, it was estimated that the number of MU residents who were born in-territory were: 2,216,650 (75.2%) Malays, 570,204 (19.3%) Chinese, and 158,840 (5.4%) Indians (Colonial Office, 1946c, p. 26).

Figure 4.6: Ethnic Composition, Population of the Malaysian Union, 1947 (%)



Source: Federation of Malaya (1948, p. 2)

**Figure 4.7: Percentage of Locally-born Chinese and Indians, 1921-1957**

Source: Chai (1977, pp. 9-10)

### **Citizenship, Nationality and Loyalty**

Following strong Malay opposition, the Anglo-Malay Working Committee (including six representatives of the MU government, four of the Malay Rulers, and two of UMNO) published a *Constitutional Proposal for Malaya* on 24 December 1946 (Malayan Union. Working Committee on the Constitutional Proposals, 1946). The proposal contained a tightening of liberal citizenship provisions in the MU, and was seen as restrictive and discriminatory to non-Malays. For example, while the MU enabled automatic citizenship acquisition through residence, this was only possible via application under the Federation of Malaya constitution. Indeed, by February 1952, less than a third of the Chinese community had become Federal citizens (Carnell, 1952, p. 512).

Furthermore, the Committee emphasised that the Federal citizenship was “not a nationality, neither could it develop into a nationality”, and clarified that it “is in addition to, and not a subtraction from nationality”. This explicit distinguishing between the terms “citizenship” and “nationality” may seem odd. However, this was an important issue of negotiation at that time because of various nationality statuses held by potential Federal citizens. First, there were British subjects in the SS who were British-protected persons under the British Protected Persons Order 1934; second, there were subjects of the Rulers in the Malay State under their respective State nationality laws. As such, the term “nationality” was understood as a *pre-existing ruler-subject status* that a person may not be willing to relinquish, while “citizenship” was understood as a *new state-citizen status* that a person acquires by virtue of the territorial and political change.

The Committee's recommendations were subsequently incorporated into the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948. Significantly, this was the juncture when "Malay" became constitutionally-defined as a person who "habitually speaks the Malay language", "professes the Muslim religion", and "conforms to Malay customs".<sup>46</sup> These definitions were subsequently written into Article 160(2) of the Constitution of Malaysia, 1957, with additional qualifications on birth, descent and domicile in the Federation of Malaysia and Singapore.

The issue of loyalty was of great significance for the citizenship/nationality negotiations. This is captured in a statement by the Communities Liaison Committee (1950):

*It should be enacted that every Federal Citizen shall owe loyalty to the Federation in addition to the allegiance which he owes to His Majesty or to one of Their Highnesses or otherwise. The enactment should establish that all Federal Citizens shall not only enjoy the rights but also assume the responsibilities towards the Federation which are normally expected of the nationals of an independent state. Federal Citizenship should in effect accord as nearly as possible to nationality. ... Any Federal Citizen who is proved to have been disloyal to the federation or to have broken any Oath of Allegiance or Oath of Loyalty should forfeit his Federal Citizenship.*

In other words, in addition to "objective" criteria of birth and settlement, a citizen-to-be is required to also prove his/her "subjective" loyalty and allegiance to the Federation. More importantly, this loyalty is expected to be in addition to any existing loyalties he/she has for the state, the Sultan or the British Empire.

The British Nationality Act 1948 brought about a change in nationality laws of the UK and Colonies. The Act introduced a new conception of territorial citizenship within the Commonwealth, known as "citizen of the UK and Colonies" (CUKC). To address this, the Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance 1952 was introduced to replace the Federation of Agreement of 1948. Notably, the 1952 Ordinance allowed for the following persons to acquire Federal citizenship: firstly, CUKCs who were born *outside* of the Federation of Malaya; secondly, a woman who is a CUKC who is married to a Federal citizen; and finally, members of any forces of the Federation with relevant years of service, who declares permanent settlement in the Federation.

There are three points of note in these citizenship negotiations and constitutional amendments. Firstly, it was difficult to arrive at a citizenship proposal that was appropriate and acceptable to the multi-ethnic Malayan society of that time. Secondly, however, Malay interests have been prioritised over other interests because their "legitimate" interests were

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<sup>46</sup> This definition prescribes that "Malay" is by legal default, also a Muslim. In the 1957 Constitution of Malaysia, "Muslim religion" was changed to "religion of Islam" by Act A354, section 45, in force from 27 August 1976.



also supported by the British colonial administration. Thirdly, and following from the first two points, “loyalty” has been made an important criteria for citizenship conferment because it could be used as a legitimate criteria/excuse for access to Federal Citizenship. As I will go on to show, these points are important to contextualise how Malaysia’s *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship came into being, as well as in understanding why the post-colonial Malaysian state and mobile Malaysians conflate Malaysian citizenship with national loyalty.

### **Introducing Race-Based Politics: The Alliance**

*... the demands of Malaya's races would be achieved the most effectively not by multi-racial parties but through bargains struck between communal organisations. It was to be to the Alliance of mutually exclusive communal parties, not to a homogenous national movement, that the British were to transfer power in 1957.*

Stockwell (1979, p. 172)

In the lead up towards independence, the British colonial administration expressed that this would only be possible if the various ethnic groups proved that they were able to work together in harmony. An Alliance party was formed between the race-based political parties of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) with the common goals of achieving independence from the British. This proved to be a winning strategy. In the federal elections of July 1955, the Alliance won 81% of the vote and 51 of the 52 contested seats.

It is important to understand the historical circumstances that gave rise to these political parties. UMNO was formed in May 1946 in the midst of Malay protests against the MU proposal of a common citizenship and hence advocated a strong pro-Malay stance. MIC was formed in August 1946 to represent the interests of the Indian community, the majority of whom were indentured labour immigrants from India. MCA was formed in February 1949 amidst grievances over the Federation of Malaya citizenship terms for the Chinese who were under threat of repatriation to China during the Malayan Emergency in 1948.<sup>47</sup> In a nutshell, UMNO represented the Malay “natives”, MIC the Indian “immigrants”, and MCA the Chinese “immigrants”. Naturally, issues of citizenship and race – in terms of who can legitimately claim indigeneity and the accompanying rights – were extremely important and difficult to reconcile between the three parties of the Alliance.

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<sup>47</sup> Kua (2011) finds from archival records that it was Sir Henry Gurney, the British High Commissioner, who initiated the idea of MCA as a counterpart of UMNO.

Although the UMNO-MCA-MIC coalition was formed as an Alliance, UMNO was the dominant party and pushed for retention of certain aspects of Malay traditions, such as the position of the Malay Sultans, Islam as the official religion, Malay as the national language, and special positions of the Malays, including Malay land reservation rights. A “political bargain” was eventually reached between member parties of the Alliance.<sup>48</sup> In exchange for UMNO’s agreement for a *jus soli* Malayan citizenship, the MCA and MIC agreed to accept: firstly, the existing four-to-one ratio of Malays to non-Malays in the Malayan civil service;<sup>49</sup> secondly, the adoption of Malay as the national language;<sup>50</sup> and thirdly, an educational policy of “Malayan curriculum”. In addition, UMNO assured that non-Malays would be able to engage in economic activities without fear of discriminatory taxation (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p. 269).

In January 1956, Tunku Abdul Rahman (hereafter “Tunku”), the UMNO leader who subsequently became Malaya’s first Prime Minister, led a delegation to the Constitutional Conference in London. The conference proposed the appointment of an independent constitutional commission (known as “the Reid Commission”) to review and make recommendations for a constitution for the Federation of Malaysia. The terms of reference include: firstly, “the safeguarding of the position and prestige” of the Malay Sultans; secondly, “a common nationality for the whole of the Federation”; and thirdly, “the safeguarding of the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities” (Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission, 1957, p. 2). In regards to citizenship, an explanatory note was included in the agreement of the Conference of Rulers to the Reid Commission’s terms of reference:

*Their Highnesses [i.e. the Malay Sultans] wish it to be understood that they do not wish the word ‘nationality’ ... to be interpreted by the Commission in a strict legal sense but to be used widely enough to include both nationality and citizenship so that, if the Commission so wishes, it can preserve the combination of nationality and citizenship which is expressed in the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948, but naturally without any restriction on the expansion of citizenship so as to produce what in effect would be ‘a common nationality’.*

This, again, shows the ambiguous and interchangeable nature of the terms “citizenship” and “nationality” in this historical context.

<sup>48</sup> Mustafa Kamal Anuar (1990) highlights that the Alliance was *inter*-ethnic instead of multi-ethnic – membership was only possible through each ethnic-based party. This also meant that inherent conflicts existed as each party tried to respond to demands of the ethnic groups they represent.

<sup>49</sup> Before 1953, non-Malays were not entitled to enter the Malayan Civil Service (Huang, 1970, p. 32). The four-to-one quota was calculated from actual employment data, and was intended to be evaluated after the expected “unifying effect” following the 1952 Barnes’ Report on Education (Unknown author, 1956, Appendix B).

<sup>50</sup> This perhaps led to the change in language requirement for citizenship naturalization: while previously knowledge of English or Malay would be sufficient, this was changed to only knowledge of Malay in the 1957 Constitution (see **Appendix A7**).

The Reid Commission conducted 118 meetings in Malaya and visited each of the States and Settlements. In addition, it received 131 memoranda from individuals and organisations. The Commission concurred with UMNO's pro-Malay agenda, as is reflected in its recommendations to the following (Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission, 1957, pp. 87-95):

- Paragraph 38: Against the proposal for retrospective *jus soli* citizenship; and
- Paragraphs 40-41: Malay language test for citizenship applicants; and
- Paragraph 165: Special position of the Malays with regard to Malay reservations, quotas for admission to public services, quotas in the issuance of permits or licences, scholarships, bursaries and other aids for educational purposes; and
- Paragraph 170: Malay as the national language.

It is worthy to note that while the Commission recommended a 15-year period for a review of the quotas pertaining to the special position of the Malays, this was not subsequently written into the Constitution. This suggests that although the recommendations were to an extent independent and impartial, this did not mean that they would be implemented, especially since decision-making at the state level had been dominated by Anglo-Malay political interests.

Following the submission of the Commission's report, the Federal Legislative Council passed the new constitution that took effect on the day of the Federation's independence (known as "Merdeka Day", lit. "Independence Day"). The Federation of Malaya (known as "Malaya") that was forged on 31 August 1957 comprised of some 5,200,000 people, of whom about 2,200,000 were Malays and indigenous groups, while the remaining 3,000,000 were non-Malays (Cheah, 2002, p. 5). It is important to note that the Malays were not the majority of the population, and this perhaps contributed to their fierce safeguarding of Malay interests and special privileges amidst fears of "losing" their native land to "immigrant others".

Thus, the birth of Malaya was a result of ethno-political compromise between Malaya's ethnic groups, represented by the race-based political parties of UMNO, MCA and MIC. The Malays insisted on their special privileges as rightful "natives". The acceptance of *jus soli* citizenship must have been to them an extremely generous compromise to accord shared membership to the non-indigenous groups. This was expressed by Tunku in his speech over Radio Malaysia on 22 April 1956 (Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, 1984, pp. 102-103):

*The Malays' only chance of keeping our identity in this country alive is to insist on the retention of our inherent rights guaranteed by the Federation of Malaya Agreement, by treaties made between the British Government and the Rulers. Under the changes visualised by the new constitution, the Malays are prepared within reason to share those rights with others who owe loyalty to this country. I must ask non-Malays to be fair and considerate and not to make unreasonable demands, for it is well to remember*

*that no natives of any country in the world have given away so much as the Malays have done. No natives have been as friendly to immigrant people as the Malays have been. Nobody need have any fear as to their future well-being in independent Malaya.*

Tunku's statement reflects the underlying belief characteristic of the Malays during the time: the Malays are "natives"; and hence inclusion of non-Malays as fellow-Malayans was an act of benevolent sharing of what was rightly the Malays'.<sup>51</sup> Citizenship and conferment of rights became compromised through *quid pro quo* understanding – for example Chinese cooperation in improving Malay economic position in exchange for Malay cooperation in the Chinese political position (Ongkili, 1985, p. 217). As a result of the "bargain", national identity and citizenship remained an unresolved matter. This continued to present recurrent challenges to Malaysia's racial politics and efforts at national unity.

### **Introducing Borders and Sovereignty**

*[W]hen the British signed treaties, they effectively introduced a system of fixed boundaries in the Malay world, forever changing the boundary of system of the traditional kerajaan.*

Fernandez (1999, p. 42)

*There was clearly no cultural or social basis for the state; Malaysia was strictly a product of political expediencies.*

Tan (2008, p. 6)

The MU proposal and its subsequent failure took place at a historical juncture when the British colonial government took the approach of preparing its colonies towards independence. As a result, negotiations continued towards the creation of the Federation of Malaya in 1948. Singapore and the Borneo states of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei were excluded for British colonial economic and political interests.<sup>52</sup> In 1957, a new nation-state, the Federation of Malaysia, was formed, an expansion of the Federation of Malaya to include Sabah and Sarawak.

The British colonial government, together with the UMNO-led Alliance, took care to achieve a delicate balancing of ethnic proportions and the maintenance of Malay dominance amongst

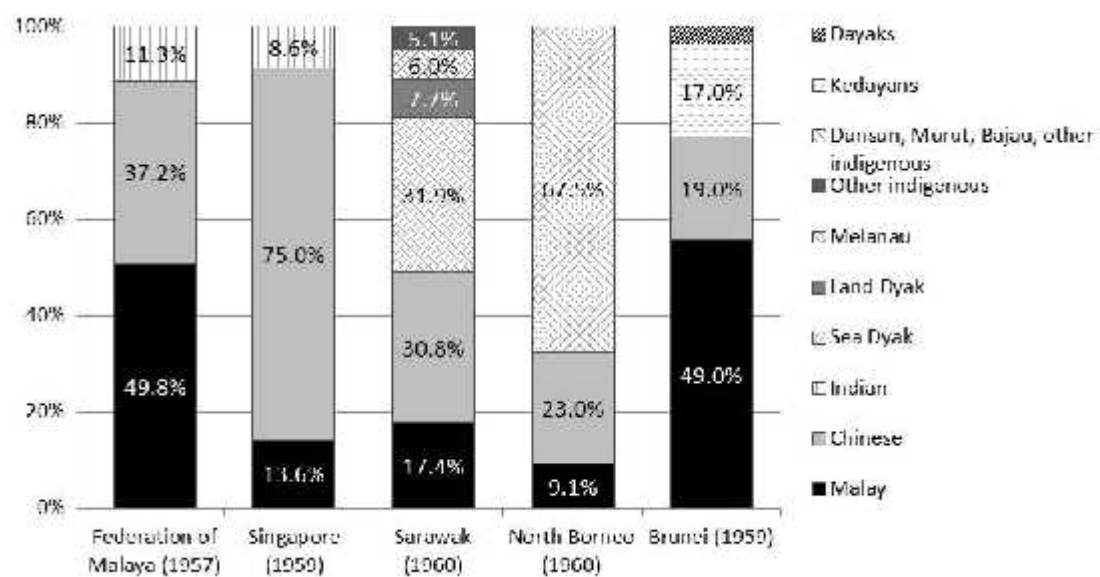
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<sup>51</sup> After independence, however, Tunku's administration (1957-1970) focused on "national unity" through construction of a pluralistic and multicultural Malaysia. Full implementation of the "Malay nation-state" was delayed (Cheah, 2002, p. 77).

<sup>52</sup> Cheeseman (1949) suggests that educational policy was also a consideration in the decision to exclude Singapore from the Federation.

the electorate.<sup>53</sup> Malaysia was to consist of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. In regards to Singapore, the Malayan leaders were initially concerned with firstly, the overwhelming Chinese majority in Singapore's population (**Figure 4.8**); and secondly, the perceived threat of communist take-over of Singapore (Ongkili, 1985, p. 152). The inclusion of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei, with their indigenous peoples, was seen as strategic in maintaining a Malay majority to counter balance the Chinese population. Singapore, however, was eventually included in the Federation of Malaysia to curb a possible communist subversion of the Malayan mainland.

**Figure 4.8: Ethnic Proportions in Territories to be Included in the Federation of Malaysia**



Source: Federation of Malaya. (1962)

The leaders of Sabah and Sarawak were initially suspicious of the merger with Malaya as they feared that both states would become colonies of the Federation of Malaya rather than independent states. However, joining Malaysia enabled independence from the British, and both states eventually accepted the proposal. Brunei, however, decided not to become part of Malaysia for various political reasons (see Bedlington, 1978; Ongkili, 1985). Thus, the Federation of Malaysia, consisting of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, was proclaimed on 16 September 1963.

<sup>53</sup> Mohd Rizal Mohd Yaakop (2009), building upon Stockwell's (1998) work, provides an alternative explanation: Malaysia was established to ensure regional "political security". This included firstly, mitigating communist threats within the region generally, and in Singapore specifically; secondly, addressing political unrest in Singapore; thirdly, facilitating independence of the Borneo States which the British administration felt was not possible without merger with Malaysia; and finally, improving British international relations with the USA and in the United Nations.

Following this, Lee Kuan Yew, the leader of Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP), started to publicly question the basis of Malay rule and criticised UMNO for not creating a more balanced position between the various ethnic groups. His campaign for a "Malaysian Malaysia" was seen as a direct threat to Malay privileges embodied in the Malayan Constitution. Mounting tensions led to race riots between Malays and Chinese in Singapore in July and September 1964. Finally, on 9 August 1965, Singapore was expelled from Malaysia.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, within the relatively short period of 1946 to 1965, British Malaya (and British Borneo) took various forms of "nation-state": from the MU in 1946, the Federation of Malaya in 1948, the Federation of Malaysia in 1957, Malaysia in 1963, and finally, the Malaysia of today in 1965 (see **Table 4.3**). Tan (2008, p. 3) notes that:

*Malaysia was thus an artificial political entity, the outcome of a concatenation of interests and motives of a number of political actors in London and Southeast Asia in the early 1960s.*

However, these rapid and arbitrary changes in political boundaries and sovereign identities were not new to Malaysia. Under British colonial rule, the various states previously governed as the SS, the FMS and the UMS. Perhaps these frequent changes in territorial boundaries and governance systems also contributed to a transient sense of settlement and mobility for a people who were not strangers to migrating lives in the first place.

#### **4.4 Summary**

In this chapter, I outlined the historical context and British colonial strategies grounding the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. First, I focused on the pre-colonial period. I described the normalcy of migration, the lack of distinctions between immigrants and natives, and the existence of Malay Sultanates in Peninsular Malaya and Borneo. I highlighted how Western concepts of citizenship, government and territorial boundaries were alien to the area. Second, I introduced the social, economic and political contexts during British colonial rule. I showed how there has been a shift in British colonial administrative approach before and after World War II. Before the war, the degrees and forms of British intervention varied between the SS, the FMS and the UMS. Wartime planning gave birth to the MU, a proposal conceptualised to capitalise on the reoccupation opportunity to implement drastic changes and to correct previous wrong-doings.

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<sup>54</sup> For details see Milne (1966); Ongkili (1985).

The bulk of this chapter focused on three British colonial legacies leading to the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. First, race became materialised in concrete forms. The British encouraged systemised labour immigration to support their mercantile interests in Malaya. Following the "divide-and-rule" strategy, as well as the creation of racial stereotypes based on an inherent racial ideology, the people in Malaya were "placed" in racial categories. Thus, one's race predetermined one's characteristics and economic activities. Furthermore, the British congealed the myth of Malay indigeneity in three interrelated ways: firstly, by conflating the term *Melayu* with a racial identity bound to a specific territory; secondly, by homogenising the Malay racial identity through census categories; and thirdly, by recognising and legitimising the Malays' rights to their "native" land. The need to protect the Malay race vis-à-vis the "intruding immigrants" was further exacerbated during the Emergency period, when the Chinese were homogenised and equated to the Communist "terrorists". This further legitimised British intervention in Malaya, and their important position as "Malay protector".

A second colonial legacy is the promotion of education as a form of aspiration – not just for the sake of education, but more as a stepping stone for social mobility in the form of postgraduate employment. Before the 1920s, the British adopted a *laissez-faire* approach, thus allowing the developments of separate vernacular school streams. With increased British interest in the education and training of the Malay aristocrat, English medium schools came to be seen as a means of entering the prestigious civil service. The MCKK, Kirkby College and various overseas scholarship schemes led to the emergence of new elite classes – the bureaucrat and the educator – who would enter the civil service and play key roles in the formation and development of post-colonial Malaysia. Western education became institutionalised as a means to achieve aspirations for social mobility. Streams of overseas education, especially to Britain, sowed the seeds of a culture of migration in post-colonial Malaysia.

The third colonial legacy is the introduction and constitution of Western concepts of borders, sovereignty and citizenship. In this respect, the MU proposal was a key milestone, although it existed for less than two years. First, the MU introduced the concept of a federal nation-state that amalgamated disparate pre-war territories with diverse social, economic and political histories. This radically challenged existing political structures and ruler-subject relations. Second, the MU introduced the controversial concept of a common citizenship to a population where the myth of Malay indigeneity vis-à-vis perpetually transient "immigrant" groups had been made real during British colonial rule. This resulted in confusion and anxiety – within *and* between ethnic groups – which led to two outcomes: firstly, the social stratification of the population along racial lines; and secondly, the conflation of citizenship with nationality. Third,

by introducing Western liberal citizenship and a system of electoral voting, the MU facilitated the emergence of race-based political parties and the winning strategy of communal coalitions. Although the origins of these three colonial legacies may have existed prior to the arrival of British colonial intervention, my argument is that the British colonial administration facilitated, prioritised and exacerbated conditions that would have otherwise developed more organically in due course. For example, immigration to Malaya would have taken place – as it had over the past centuries. However, it is the British-led systemised large scale labour immigration, the creation of racial stereotypes and ideology which translated into socio-economic stratification along racial lines, and the continued criminalisation and exclusion of immigrants vis-à-vis the privileged Malay “natives” that have planted the seeds of legitimised racism in Malaya. As I will show in **Chapter 5**, these colonial legacies were carried on and perpetuated by the post-colonial Malaysian state.



## CHAPTER 5. THE POST-COLONIAL STATE CARRIES ON

In **Chapter 4**, I identified three British colonial legacies pertaining to Malaysia's citizenship habitus: firstly, the materialising of race; secondly, aspirations for British/Western education; and thirdly, ambiguities in meanings of citizenship and nationality. My argument is that British colonialism facilitated, prioritised and exacerbated conditions that might have otherwise developed more organically in due course. As a result, "race" became a significant factor in post-colonial Malaysian society. As I have shown in **Section 4.3.3**, this has political significance, resulting in Malaysia's race-based political representation and communal politics based on "racial compromise". Since constitutional laws and policymaking were made by politicians elected into power, these in turn implicate the constitution of Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship, which affects various aspects of Malaysian social life (e.g. education, employment).

This chapter extends this line of argument by looking at how the post-colonial Malaysian state perpetuates, develops and exacerbates these colonial legacies. While the British colonial period introduced and planted the seeds of these legacies, equal attention should be accorded to how the post-colonial state nurtures and develops these further. Osterhammel (1997, p. 68) notes that

*[w]hereas the European colonial powers ... had tolerated the diversity of plural societies or even supported them in the spirit of the "divide and conquer" principle, post-colonial politics often adopted the homogenizing claims to exclusivity of the European concept of "one state, one nation." In this way nation-states developed that were not supported by deeply rooted nations.*

It is precisely because the Malaysian "nation-state" emerged out of compromised negotiations under socio-political circumstances at the time of its making, that issues of race/ethnicity and citizenship/nationality were inevitably left unresolved. As a result, these issues continue to pervade Malaysian society after her independence. But more importantly, my purpose is to show how these colonial legacies, carried forward by the post-colonial Malaysian state, subsequently affect, and are translated into mobile Malaysians' culture of migration (**Part III** of this thesis).

The chapter is organised into three themes. The first theme focuses on “race” as a problem the post-colonial Malaysian state needs to tackle (**Section 5.1**). I discuss this in two areas: citizenship and pro-*Bumiputera* affirmative action policies. The second theme focuses on efforts towards instilling a sense of national unity and loyalty (**Section 5.2**). I discuss three modes of government intervention in educating, governing, and motivating the citizenry. The third theme focuses on how the post-colonial Malaysian government ensures its continual political power through interventions in the electoral process (**Section 5.3**). In **Section 5.4**, I link the three themes together to show how the need to control “racial tensions” and ensure “national unity” at all costs has been utilised as discourse for political legitimacy. Crucially, I show how this relates back to the three British colonial legacies I identified in **Chapter 4**.

## **5.1 Focusing on “Race”**

### **5.1.1 May 1969 Riots**

In **Chapter 4**, we have seen how race became a concrete category stratifying the Malaysian society. This, in turn, translates into race-based political representation and the Alliance’s communal coalition formula. In 1965, Singapore exited from the Federation of Malaysia, one of the reasons being the questioning of Malay-Chinese racial issues (see Fletcher, 1969). It was also significant that two Malay-Chinese riots occurred in Singapore in July and September 1964.<sup>55</sup> The exit of Singapore, however, did not remove the growing racial tensions completely. This became evident in the 1969 Federal Elections, where each ethnic group saw it as a means of preserving ethnic self-interests especially on vernacular education and language policies.<sup>56</sup> The Alliance lost a large number of seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* to opposition parties of The Gerakan (lit. “The Movement”), Democratic Action Party (DAP), People’s Progressive Party (PPP) and Parti Islam Sa-Melayu (PAS) (lit. “Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party”).

On 13 May 1969, a day after the elections, violent communal riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur as celebrating supporters of The Gerakan and DAP clashed with UMNO supporters. The supporters were reported to have shouted offensive phrases such as “*Melayu sekarang ta’da*

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<sup>55</sup> The causes of the riots vary depending on individual and collective perspectives (Low, 2001). Nevertheless, the official account is twofold: first, rising political tensions between the Malayan government headed by UMNO and the Singapore government headed by the People’s Action Party (PAP); and second, Singapore’s minority Malays’ resentment that their expectation to benefit from Malay special rights in the 1957 Federation of Malaya Constitution was not part of the agreement in Singapore’s merger with Malaysia (Clutterbuck, 1984; Tan, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> For example the Merdeka University issue (**Section 5.1.3**).

*kuasa lagi*" (lit. "Now the Malays have lost their powers") and "*Mati Melayu, sakai*"<sup>57</sup> *pergi masok hutan!*" (lit. "Death to the Malays, aborigines go back to the jungle!" (Ongkili, 1985, p. 204). A national emergency was subsequently declared, and the country ruled by a National Operations Council (NOC) until 20 February 1971 when the Parliament reconvened.

While the May 13 incident has been officially accorded to racial tensions (NOC, 1969), some scholars have highlighted that it was indeed political. Syed Hussein Alatas (1971, p. 801), for example, suggests that the ethnic tensions and sentiments "had been whipped up by unscrupulous politicians." Similarly, Khoo (1999) notes that ethnic tensions were high as ethnic-based opposition parties capitalised on communal sentiments in their campaigns. Drawing from declassified public records from the Public Records Office in London, Kua (2008b, pp. 34-35) shows how May 13 was "a *coup d'état* by the then emergent Malay state-capitalist class" to depose Tunku, who was perceived to represent the "outdated Malay aristocracy".

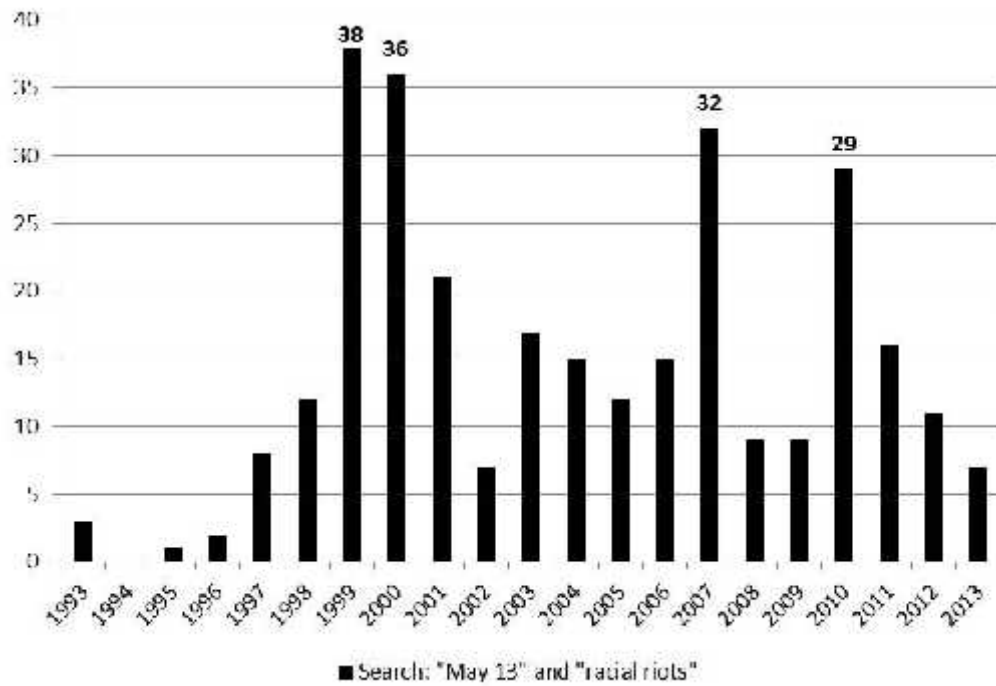
Nevertheless, the official account remains and has been repeatedly invoked from time-to-time as reminders of the importance of keeping "racial harmony". **Figure 5.1** shows the number of Malaysian English news articles from 1993 to 2013 mentioning the May 13 incident and "racial riots". These appear to peak in the 1999-2001 period, in 2007 (before the 12th General Election in 2008), and in 2010. Out of the 300 articles, 43.7% were published in the *New Straits Times*, a major national newspaper known for its pro-government alignment (**Figure 5.2**).

More recently, the incident was invoked again in the lead up to the 13th General Election. For example, "the tragedy of May 13" caused by "racial tension" was raised during the UMNO General Assembly in November 2012 (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2012c). In December 2012, a Malay right-wing group leader said that the Chinese community will "threaten national security" with increasing political and economic power, and warned that "the May 13 incident will return" (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2012b). In October 2012, it was announced that the public release of the controversial historical biographical film "*Tanda Putera*" (lit. "Mark of Princes"), based on the May 13 incident, had been put off indefinitely until after Malaysia's 13th General Election (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2012a).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Sakai*, used generally for aborigines, is a term with derogatory connotations (Williams-Hunt, 1952).

<sup>58</sup> Screening of "*New Village*", a Chinese feature film about life in new villages during the Malayan Emergency, has been suspended, pending review by the Censorship Board. The film "is said to promote communism" (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2013).

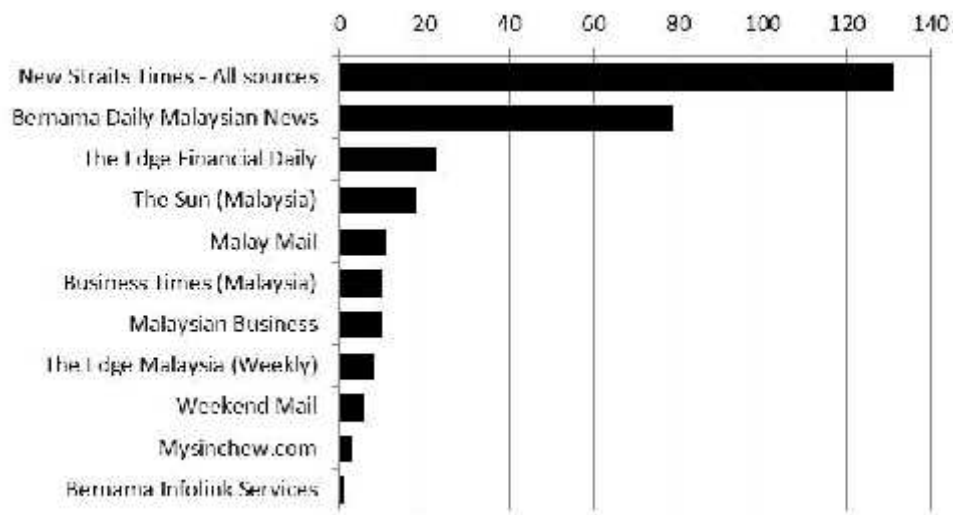
**Figure 5.1: Number of Malaysian English News Articles with References to “May 13” and “Racial Riots”, 1993-2013**



*Note: Search covers 13 May 1969 to 19 May 2013.*

Source: Factiva (2013)

**Figure 5.2: Sources of Malaysian English News Articles with References to “May 13” and “Racial Riots”, 1993-2013**



Source: Factiva (2013)

The May 13 incident has also been emphasised in the education curriculum. A volume on Malaysian studies targeted at college and university students describes the event as “a black

mark in the history of racial relations in Malaysia” and “the worst racial conflict in the country” (Nazaruddin Hj. Mohd Jali, et al., 2003, p. 168). The volume further furnished a sketch of the history of racial relations in Malaysia, marking the “May 13th Tragedy” as one of the three lowest points in Malaysian history since 1500 (**Figure 5.3**). These examples point to the fact that the fear of “racial riots” – exemplified by the May 13 incident – is deeply embedded in the Malaysian society, a point I will return to in **Chapter 8**.

**Figure 5.3: A Rough Sketch of the History of Racial Relations in Malaysia**



Source: Nazaruddin Hj. Mohd Jali, et al. (2003, p. 167)

### **5.1.2 Citizenship as Exclusivity**

After independence, the post-colonial Malaysian government introduced a series of legislative and constitutional amendments contributing towards the construction of citizenship as an exclusive right. First, the National Registration Act 1959 formalised citizenship through a process of official recognition and registration. However, this needs to be understood in the context of the Emergency period and more restrictive citizenship legislation introduced in 1948. Second, constitutional amendments in 1970 sealed the *Bumiputeras*’ special rights and prevented any questioning of those rights under the Sedition Act (1948). Taken altogether, these contributed to the understanding of Malaysian citizenship as an exclusive, *Bumiputera*-differentiated, and yet never to be questioned provision. By extension, any policy related to *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship rights (e.g. affirmative action policies) could not be questioned in public.

**National Registration Act 1959: Formalising Citizenship**

In **Section 4.3.3**, I discussed the politics and complexities surrounding negotiations about the constitution of citizenship in Malaysia. A recurrent issue has been the indigenous-immigrant debate, conflated as the Malay-non-Malay fight for citizenship recognition. Following the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, citizenship acquisition became more restrictive. This resulted in differentiated eligibility and access to citizenship registration. More importantly, this contributed to an understanding that citizenship is an exclusive right: not every settled resident in Malaya/Malaysia is recognised as a citizen according to the Constitution.

By 1950, it was estimated that about 150,000 Chinese and 5,000 Indians (including Pakistanis and Ceylonese) became citizens by application (Chai, 1977, p. 8). The total number of citizens was 3,275,000 out of an estimated total population of 5,226,549 (Ratnam, 1965, p. 92). The breakdown of citizenship status by ethnic groups, however, shows that there is great disparity across ethnic groups in terms of those who held citizenship status, particularly the Chinese (**Table 5.1**). While the Chinese made up 38.5% of the total population, they only contributed to 15.3% of Malayan citizens. The low percentage of Chinese holding citizenship can be attributed to the politicised issue of offering the Chinese Malayan citizenship amidst threats of communist activities. In the 1955 federal elections, the Chinese constituted about 20% of the electorate, despite making up about 50% of the total population. Wade (2009) accords this to the stringent citizenship criteria of the 1948 Federation Agreement (see **Table 4.9**).

**Table 5.1: Population and Citizens in the Federation of Malaya, 1950**

Ethnic group	Total population		Total citizens		
	Number	%	Number (in round figures)	%	As % of ethnic group
Malays	2,579,914	49.4	2,500,000	76.3	46.9
Chinese	2,011,072	38.5	500,000	15.3	24.9
Indians	564,454	10.8	230,000	7.0	40.7
Others	71,109	1.3	45,000	1.4	63.3
Total	5,226,549	100.0	3,275,000	100.0	62.7


Source: Chai (1977)

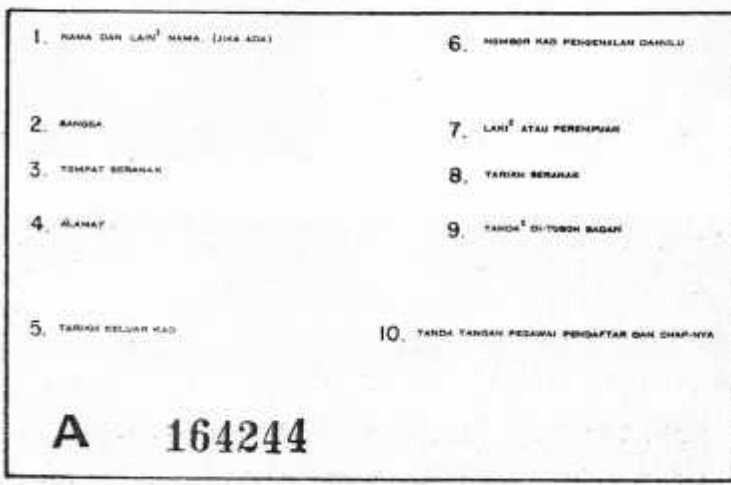
In 1948, registration of residents was introduced as an emergency measure during the outbreak of communist terrorism. The National Registration Act of 1959 was subsequently passed by the Parliament to formalise the registration of citizens through the issuance of

Figure 5.4: Federation of Malaya Identity Card

**FRONT VIEW**

Oval spaces are for left and right thumb prints and the rectangle is for the photograph.





**REAR VIEW**

1 Name and alias (if any)	6 Former I/C number
2 Race	7 Sex
3 Place of birth	8 Date of birth
4 Address	9 Physical Abnormalities
5 Date of Issue	10 Signature _____ Registration Officer
	(Place) _____

Source: Adkins (1961, Appendix V)

identity cards (I/C). The I/C contains a photograph and thumbprints on the front, and personal information at the back (**Figure 5.4**). Registration is compulsory for all persons over twelve years old. Four types of I/Cs were issued: blue for citizens; red for permanent residents; green for visitors, excluding short-term tourists or business visitors; and brown for persons registered under the Prevention of Crimes Ordinance of 1959.

Although the idea of registering citizens and residents seemed logical and simple, in reality this was difficult to implement. Firstly, the registration process required applicants to provide evidence of their birth, marriage and/or citizenship. In some cases, this was almost impossible for applicants who had no such official records. As the *Malayan Mirror* reported in February 1955, “records 40 or 50 years old are not readily available quite apart from the fact that 40 or 50 years ago, few bothered to register a birth” (quoted in Yeoh, 1989, p. 50).

Secondly, applicants were required to be interviewed during their application appointments. However, there were problems of illiteracy, language barriers, and lack of communication in remote areas. This meant that some eligible applicants (e.g. the illiterate; the aborigines) may not have been aware of the need to register. All-in-all, this contributed to the fact that citizenship in Malaysia was difficult to come by: citizenship had to be proven with official evidence, and was not an automatically-recognised birthright even if one was truly native-born.

### **Constitutional Amendments and Malay Special Rights**

*We ask ourselves: What went wrong? What are the ingredients of national survival, national unity, national progress . . . What shall we do to see to it that racial sensitivities will never again be trampled upon; that the country's activities will promote national unity; that the various limited loyalties will be fused into one, a higher loyalty towards Malaysia?*

Mohd Ghazali Shafie (1969, p. 2)

May 13 epitomised the undercurrents of fear and distrust amongst Malaysia's ethnic groups that have accumulated over the years. While the Parliament was suspended, the NOC became the supreme decision-making body. The NOC immediately sought to return the constitutional contract to protect the Malay political dominance agreed in the “bargain”, and to appease rising Malay nationalism. Specifically, the NOC institutionalised provisions in Part III, Articles 71, 152, 153 and 159 of the Constitution pertaining to citizenship; “constitutional rights and privileges” of the Malay Rulers; Malay as the national language; responsibility of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* to “safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the



States of Sabah and Sarawak”; and the proviso that any amendment to “the provisions relating to Part III, Article 38, 63 (4), 70, 71 (1), 72 (4), 152, or 153 shall not be passed without the consent of the Conference of Rulers”<sup>59</sup> (see NOC, 1969, pp. 82-87).

In addition, the NOC also removed the possibility of discussing sensitive issues in public. The Sedition Act (1948) was amended in 1969, prohibiting the questioning of “any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by” specific provisions of the Federal Constitution (The Commissioner of Law, 2006, p. 6), including that of Malay identity and special rights. Fear of political sensitivity also led to the omission of an important verbal agreement between the Alliance parties from the Alliance memorandum – the review of Article 153 (on Malay privileges), originally drafted as a temporary measure of 15-20 years unless the Parliament provided otherwise, 15 years after independence (see Thio, 2010, p. 63).

Harding (2007, p. 117) argues that these amendments contained in the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1971 were “designed to create, support and actually entrench the new social contract in the Constitution”. More importantly, and for the purpose of this thesis, I argue that these amendments were significant in underwriting Malaysia’s citizenship habitus and influencing a culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians. Firstly, the provisions sealed the special privileges of Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak (i.e. *Bumiputeras*) vis-à-vis non-*Bumiputeras*. This further reinforced the race-based “indigenous” status of certain ethnic groups, a definite extension of what was originally advocated by British colonial policies in Malaya. This has implications on a macro-societal level, the micro-family and micro-individual level. On a broader societal scale, the indigenous versus non-indigenous division is carried into domestic politics (i.e. in the form of race-based electoral representation) and affirmative action policies. On a micro scale, those who do not “belong”, and perceive themselves as never “being able to belong” *constitutionally*, turn to migration as an alternative exit for social mobility and pursuit of livelihoods.

Secondly, the provisions made it constitutionally seditious to question government policies relating to citizenship, special privileges, the national language, and the monarchy. Furthermore, these issues have been sensitised, thus relegating any act of query to a challenge against national security. This affects Malaysia’s citizenship habitus in a number of ways. First,

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<sup>59</sup> Where Part III are provisions on citizenship; Articles 38, 70 and 71 are provisions relating to the Malay Rulers; Article 152 are provisions relating to Malay as the national language; Article 153 are provisions relating to the special privileges of the Malays; and Article 159 on the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*’s responsibility in upholding Malay special rights.

citizenship is seen as a taken-for-granted – yet *Bumiputera*-differentiated – status one can never question. Second, political acts such as activism, political discussions and advocacy are seen as acts of challenging the government and/or the Constitution. These would ultimately translate into mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices, including placing huge emotional significance on their Malaysian citizenship without practising the civic and political components of citizenship; steering clear from discussing politics and race; and automatically seeking the exit alternative instead of considering any possibility of challenging the status quo (see **Chapter 8**).

### **5.1.3 Affirmative Action Policies**

To resolve socio-economic disparity between ethnic groups, the post-colonial Malaysian government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) as an affirmative action policy. This translates into interventions in higher and pre-university education in terms of *Bumiputera* quotas, facilities, institutional funding and scholarships. Following the Malayanisation of the civil service in the 1960s, there has been a “*Malay*”-sation of the civil service. Government scholarships continued the practice of linking such scholarships to civil service jobs inherited from the British colonial period. Similarly, *Bumiputera* quotas are implemented in these scholarship awards. Taken altogether, affirmative action policies in post-colonial Malaysia have resulted in the deepening of social stratification along racial lines. However, this social stratification, initially inherited as a British colonial legacy, has been turned into one that propagates Malay dominance. In other words, the post-colonial Malaysian government has strategically exacerbated and entrenched “race” above and beyond that institutionalised by the British colonial administration.

#### **New Economic Policy (NEP)**

*Overnight, the NEP dichotomised Malaysia into bumiputra [sic] and non-bumiputra [sic].*

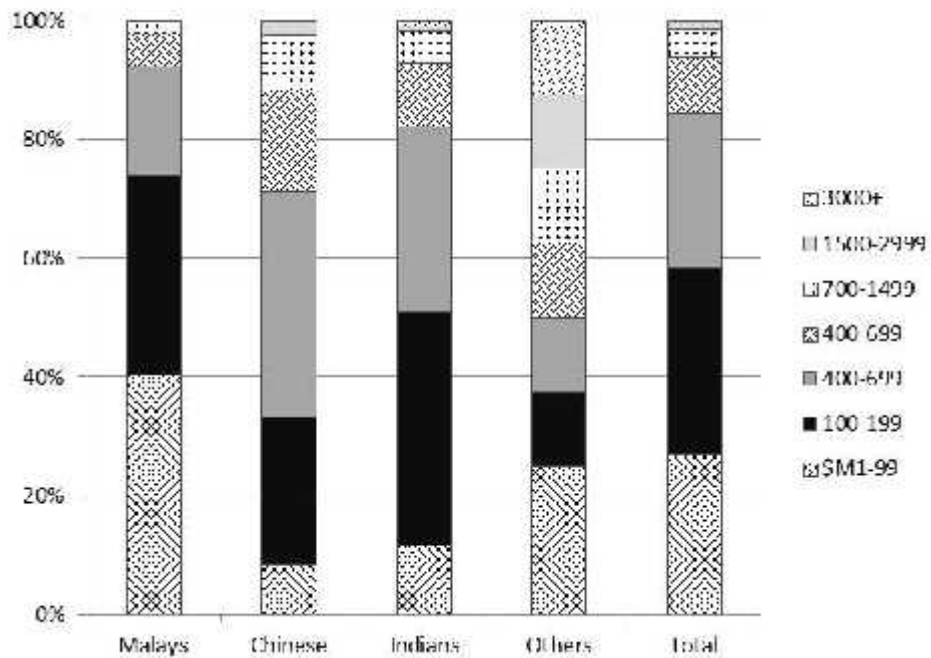
Lam and Yeoh (2004, p. 146)

*The NEP's profound influence in Malaysian life and its impressive longevity as a social institution have helped to focus economic relations as the center of the country's political life. ... The NEP aimed to remove ethnic identification in the economy by ethnicizing nearly all facets of it.*

Williamson (2002, p. 407)

Despite the Malays' special privileges and dominance in political power, economic disparity continues to persist (**Figure 5.5**). The New Economic Policy (NEP), an affirmative action policy, was thus put in place from 1970 to 1990. More importantly, the NEP was conceived with the belief that "the stability of a multi-racial nation can only be sustained when the plight of the Malay majority is addressed" (Sharifah Sofia Wan-Ahmad, 2010, p. 16). This needs to be seen in light of the socio-political context in the aftermath of the 1969 Federal Election and the May 13 incident. As I have mentioned in **Section 5.1.1**, the Alliance suffered significant losses to the opposition parties. It was thus crucial for the Alliance, led by UMNO, to reclaim political legitimisation.

**Figure 5.5: Households by Income and Ethnic Group in West Malaysia, 1970**



Source: Adapted from Bedlington (1978, p. Table 5)

Tun Abdul Razak (hereafter "Razak"), Malaysia's second Prime Minister from 1970 to 1976, saw to the implementation of the NEP. As NOC's Director of Operations, he focused on realising the "political bargain", particularly on the part of the Malays (see Hng, 2004, p. 106). Razak linked the cause of the 1969 racial riots and the problem of national unity to economic disparity, particularly of the Malays (Williamson, 2002, p. 406). Thus, he implemented affirmative action policies through the NEP's two-prong strategies: firstly, "poverty eradication regardless of race"; and secondly, "restructuring society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function" (Jomo, 2004, p. 1).

Specifically, the NEP sought to increase *Bumiputera* share of corporate equity from 1.9% in 1970 to 30% in 1990 (Khoo, 1999, p. 135). State corporations and investment arms were set up to acquire assets and investments for *Bumiputeras*. In addition, the Malays were prioritised in “job allocation, scholarships abroad, university seats” and “larger ownership stakes in Malaysian companies” (Freedman, 2001, p. 418). For example, Sharifah Sofia Wan-Ahmad (2010, p. 16) notes two such strategies: firstly, allocating a 60% quota to *Bumiputeras* for university entrance and scholarships; and secondly, specifying through the Industrial Coordination Act (1975) that every manufacturing enterprise with a capital of more than RM 250,000 must allocate 30% of its employment or its shares to *Bumiputeras*.

In practice, however, the NEP has been seen as predominantly pro-Malay (i.e. not *just* pro-*Bumiputera*) – poverty reduction policies focused on rural Malay farmers, while policies on resolving ethnic economic disparities focused on that between Malays and Chinese. This was also seen as a means of redistributing Chinese wealth to the *Bumiputeras* (Freedman, 2001). Unfortunately, the NEP has also been capitalised for individual political gains and conflated with ethnic preferential treatment in the name of upholding the Malays’ special position (Ting, 2009).

Nevertheless, most of NEP’s targets appear to have been met between 1970 and 1990 – the official poverty rate declined from 49.3% to 15%; the percentage of registered Malay professionals increased from 47% to 58.8%; and Malay ownership of corporate wealth increased from 2.4% to 20.3% (Chin, 2000, p. 1045). Income disparity between *Bumiputera* and Chinese narrowed from a ratio of 1:2.34 in 1976 to 1:1.27 in 2004 (Brown, Langer, & Stewart, 2012, p. 18). Class composition within each ethnic group had also changed dramatically (**Table 5.2**).

**Table 5.2: Class Composition of Major Ethnic Groups in Malaysia, 1970 and 1990**

	% <i>Bumiputera</i>		% Chinese		% Indian	
	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990
Upper and middle class	12.9	27.0	28.6	43.2	23.4	27.3
Working class	18.0	23.2	41.6	33.8	24.7	34.8
Agriculture	62.3	37.4	21.2	13.5	41.0	23.4
Services	6.8	12.4	8.6	8.5	10.9	14.5

Source: Crouch (1996, p. 185)

However, the significance of the NEP goes above and beyond its officially-articulated affirmative action objective. As Maznah Mohamad (2012, p. 170) points out, the NEP “created

a climate for political confidence rather than a substantial basis for Malay economic upliftment”. In other words, the NEP became a means for political legitimisation, particularly for the ruling coalition championed by UMNO, which represented a homogenised “Malay” interest by default. Maznah Mohamad (2012, p. 173) further explains that:

*For UMNO, [the NEP] was the most crucial instrument for its revival and legitimacy after the 1969 election. In that election, UMNO lost a large chunk of its support to the opposition, and hence it was through the NEP that UMNO was able to rebuild its credentials and legitimacy among the Malay constituents. The NEP created another opportunity structure for UMNO to build its power bases through the dispensation of political patronage, including access to material resources. The growth of 'money politics' built around the largesse of NEP made UMNO powerful.*

Thus, the NEP served two purposes in relation to the construction of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus. Firstly, it deepened social stratification along racial lines within the Malaysian society. This can be seen as an exacerbation of existing divisions created by the British “divide-and-rule” colonial legacy. Secondly, it strengthened race-based political representation in Malaysian politics by lending political legitimisation to UMNO. Through this process, UMNO came to be perceived as *the* government of Malaysia. In **Section 5.3**, I will return to this point through a discussion of electoral politics to show how UMNO came to be equated with the Malaysian government. This interpretation of UMNO as the Malaysian government has implications for mobile Malaysians’ citizenship and migration practices, as I will elaborate in **Part III** of this thesis.

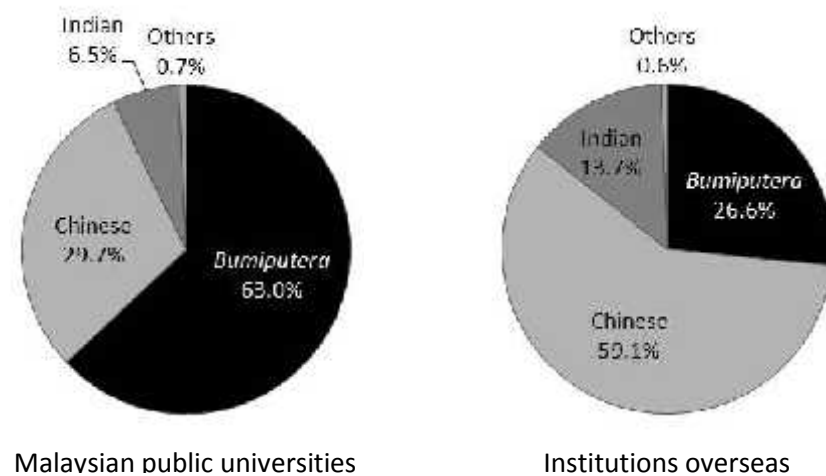
### **Higher Education: A Dual Approach**

In **Section 4.2.3**, I explained how education became institutionalised by the British colonial administration as a pathway towards employment and social mobility. Significantly, the maintenance of a dual approach to education – attention to Malay education (and particularly the Malay elites), and *laissez-faire* for vernacular education – is carried forward into employment in the labour market, especially in the civil service. The post-colonial Malaysian government adopted a similar dual approach to education as a means to alleviate the socio-economic disparity between *Bumiputeras* and non-*Bumiputeras*. As Reid (1988, p. 47) notes:

*[t]he education system is viewed by the majority of Malays and poor non-Malays as the primary vehicle for upward social mobility to a higher income and status in the modern sector. At the same time however, those already in the middle class see education as a means of transmitting status and power from one generation to the next. It is believed to be both a mechanism for reducing inequality and a perpetuator of social divisions. Education is thus of fundamental import to most Malaysians and one of the most important means utilized by the Government to achieve NEP objectives.*

The post-colonial Malaysian government adopted a few strategies to achieve NEP goals. First, *Bumiputera* quotas for public university places were introduced. This was initially set at 75:25 *Bumiputera*: non-*Bumiputera* students, and was theoretically adjusted to 55:45 by the early 1980s (Tzannatos, 1991, p. 183). Actual proportions, however, differ substantially. By 1985, the enrolment proportions were 80:20 (Tzannatos, 1991, p. 184). As a result, non-*Bumiputera* students had to resort to alternative higher education strategies, including accessing private tertiary education and/or overseas education. Indeed, this is evident in the ethnic proportions of student enrolments in local compared to overseas institutions (Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.6: Ethnic Proportions in Tertiary Education Enrolments, Malaysian Public Universities vs Institutions Overseas, 1985**



Source: Malaysia (1986)

Second, residential schools and technical institutes for *Bumiputeras* were set up. *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA), the Council of Trust for Indigenous People, was established on 1 March 1966 with the objective to aid, train and guide *Bumiputera* in areas of entrepreneurship, education and investment. From 1972 onwards, MARA established a series of residential colleges known as *Maktab Rendah Sains MARA* (MRSM) (lit. “MARA Junior Science Colleges”). Previously, only *Bumiputera* students were admitted. However, following the 2004 election pledge, a quota of 10% non-*Bumiputera* placements have been made available.

To provide skills training for *Bumiputera* students, the *Institut Teknologi MARA* (ITM) (i.e. MARA Institute of Technology) was set up in 1967. The ITM was conferred university status in 1999 and became *Universiti Teknologi MARA* (UiTM) (i.e. MARA Technological University). The ITM enrolled 6,900 students in 1975, which rose to nearly 45,000 by 1996 (Lee, 2005, p. 217). Technical and vocational skills training were provided through *Institut Kemahiran MARA* (IKM)

(lit. “MARA institute of Skills”) and *Kolej Kemahiran Tinggi* (KKTM) (lit. “Higher Skills College”). Certificates and Diplomas are offered in the fields of engineering, architecture, arts and design, and bio-medicine. MARA also offers full scholarships and education loans for university preparatory programmes (e.g A-Levels, International Baccalaureate, Australian Matriculation), university and postgraduate degrees (including Masters and PhD) in local and overseas institutes. These facilities, however, are only open to *Bumiputeras*.

Third, higher education opportunities for non-*Bumiputeras* were limited and/or suppressed vis-à-vis that created for *Bumiputeras*. In 1969, Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC), a government-aided college, was established by the MCA for non-Malays to pursue certificate and diploma education. However, its enrolment growth paled in comparison to the government-funded ITM. Its enrolment increased from 4,036 students in 1975 to 6,000 in 1980, to about 9,000 in 1996 (Lee, 2005, p. 218). Furthermore, for the first 20 years of its existence, its certificate and diploma courses were not accorded government recognition (Freedman, 2001, p. 434).

In the late-1960s, the Chinese community proposed to set-up Merdeka University to cater for graduates from Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (MICSS), whose United Examination Certificate (UEC) qualification is not recognised for entry into Malaysian public universities. These schools are not government-funded and adopt a curriculum developed by the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM) and the United Chinese School Teachers’ Association (UCSTA). A petition was submitted to the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* on 30 January 1978 for an incorporation order under the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA).<sup>60</sup> After the petition was rejected, the case was brought to the High Court, which objected to the proposal on the grounds that: firstly, since the medium of instruction would be in Chinese (i.e. Mandarin), this was contrary to the national education policy; secondly, it would be set up by a private organisation; and thirdly, it would only be admitting students from MICSS.

As Reid (1988) notes, the Merdeka University campaign symbolised the frustration of the Chinese community with the government’s educational policy. At the same time, it also became a topic for debate along broadly ethnic lines (see ALIRAN, 1981): the Malay community opposed the Chinese-language medium of the proposed university, while the

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<sup>60</sup> The UUCA prohibits the establishment of universities and higher educational institutes, unless approved by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*. Any person found guilty would be liable to a fine or imprisonment, or both.

Chinese community saw the opposition as curtailment of the development and preservation of Chinese culture. Following the failure of the Merdeka University, the UCSCAM submitted a proposal for the establishment of New Era College in August 1994. The proposal was approved three years later, and the College started operations in March 1998.

Similar to the Merdeka University, the New Era College offers primarily Chinese-medium courses. This “reversal” of policy stance towards non-Malay higher education needs to be contextualised in the expansion of the higher education industry in 1990s Malaysia. First, there has been an increase in the number of public institutions of higher learning in Malaysia since the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> Second, there has also been an increase in the number of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia following the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996. The latter, in particular, made it possible for TARC and the New Era College to attain university status in 2001 and 2013 respectively.<sup>62</sup>

The comparative support accorded to *Bumiputera* and non-*Bumiputera* education demonstrates the dual approach towards higher education adopted by the post-colonial Malaysian government. In line with the NEP’s goals, access to university education for *Bumiputeras* has been expanded from the secondary school stage onwards. This is further assisted by quotas for public university enrolment. On the other hand, non-*Bumiputera* education has seen delayed progression and development. For example, it was only in the late-1990s that alternatives were made available for MICSS students in the form of private higher educational institutes.

As Raman and Sua (2010, p. 130) observe:

*At all levels of education, enrolment choices and preferential policies have strengthened alternative streams for getting an education that is divided along ethnic lines. There exist educational pathways in which students go through the entire process of schooling with little or no ethnic interaction at all.*

Although the NEP and its underlying affirmative action ethos was geared towards improving the socio-economic circumstances of the *Bumiputeras*, the post-colonial Malaysian government’s interventions in higher education have unfortunately deepened social stratification along racial lines. To ensure greater higher education enrolment for *Bumiputeras*,

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<sup>61</sup> This includes Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in 1992, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in 1997, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) in 1998, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) in 1999, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) in 2000, Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) in 2001, Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) in 2002, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNISZA) in 2005, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) and Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM) in 2006.

<sup>62</sup> In May 2013, the New Era College is in the process of registering as a private university.

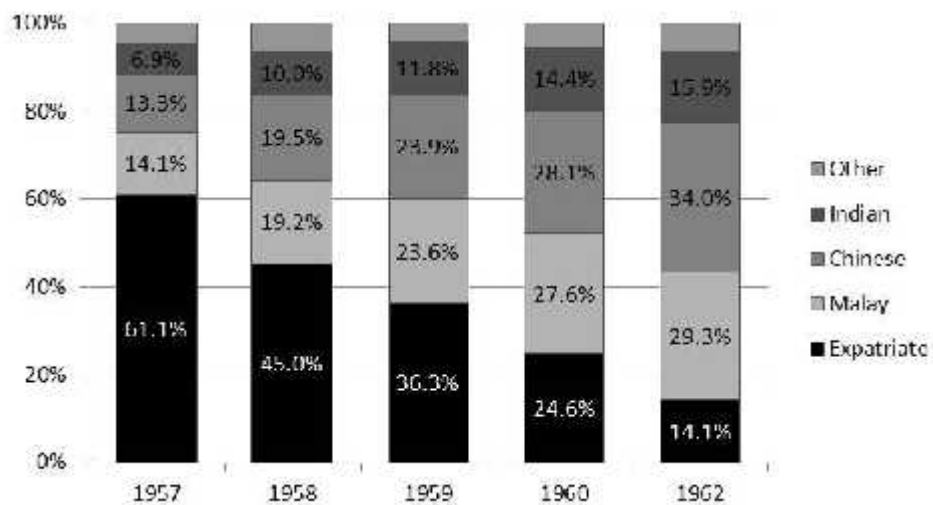


it was necessary to intervene in stages *before* students entered higher education. As a result, the education system became a perpetuator of “racial divide” inherited as colonial legacy, ironically as it was seen as a means of removing “racial divide” through a unified curriculum.

### **Malayanisation and “Malay”-isation of the Civil Service**

In **Section 4.3.2**, I have explained how the civil service, with its linkages to the prestigious Malayan Civil Service (MCS), became synonymous with respected social status. However, entry into the MCS has been reserved primarily for Malays – the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) and the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) institutionalised the grooming and recruitment of Malays into the civil service. To assist in the transition towards self-government in line with Malaysia’s independence, a “Malayanisation scheme” was officially introduced in 1956. In essence, the scheme provided for the gradual replacement of British expatriate civil service officers with Malaysians. The Malayanisation process took place over three phases from 1960 to 1965.

**Figure 5.7: Ethnic Representation in the Senior Bureaucracy, 1957-1962**

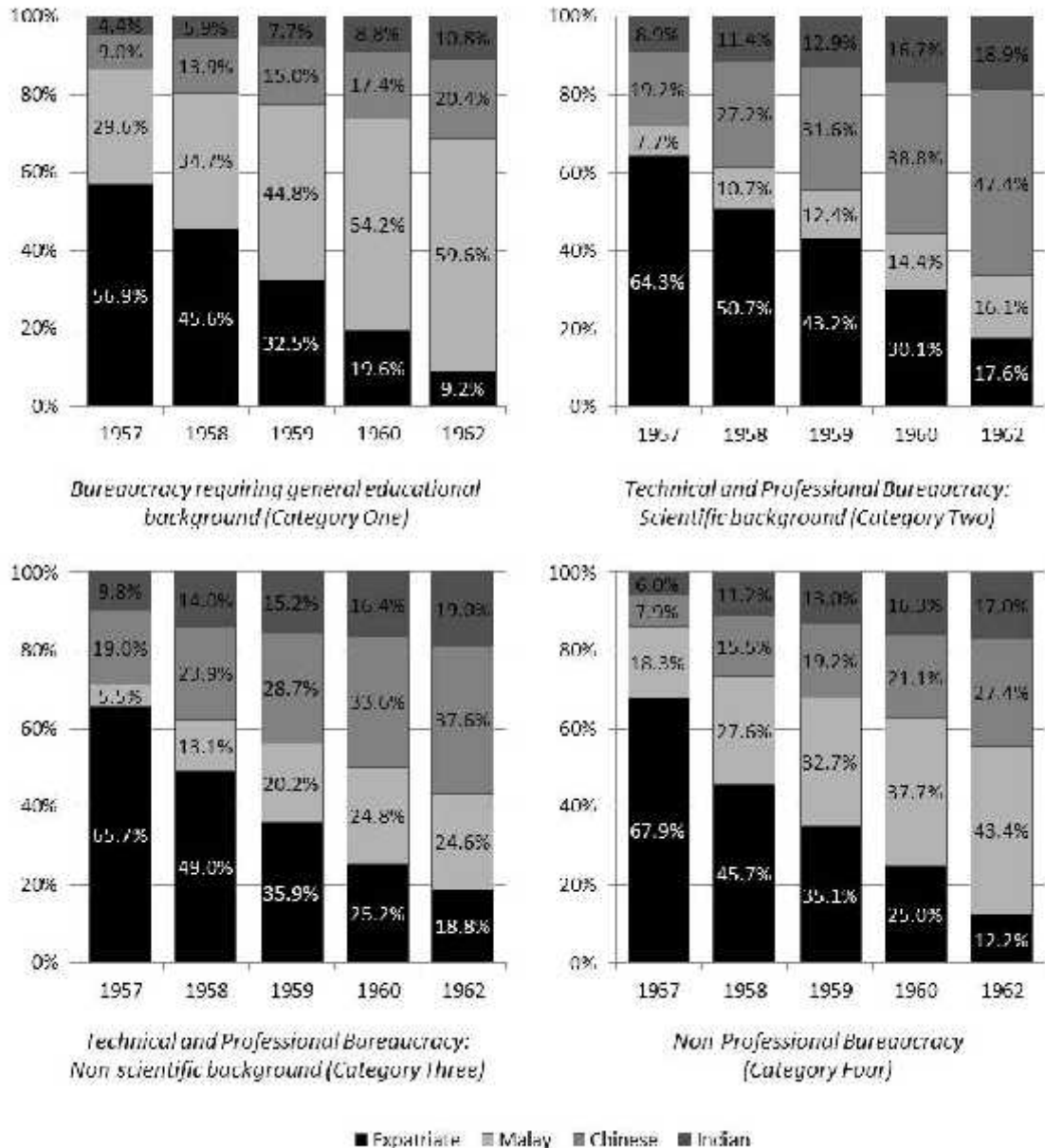


Source: Tilman (1964, p. 70)

Although the three major ethnic groups were fairly represented in the MCS senior bureaucracy following Malayanisation (**Figure 5.7**), this did not translate into other ranks. Malay officers were predominantly in bureaucratic positions requiring general educational background, while Chinese officers were predominantly in technical and professional positions requiring scientific educational background (**Figure 5.8**). Furthermore, ethnic representations were also disproportionately distributed across departments. As Bedlington (1978, p. 165) notes:

... Malays predominated in the administrative services (Malay entrance thereto was and is ensured by an advantageous quota system), the police, prisons, forestry, and customs departments, while non-Malays were more numerous in the professional and technical departments such as public works, health, agriculture, drainage and irrigation, and telecommunications – a pattern that exists today.

Figure 5.8: Ethnic Representation in Bureaucracy, by Educational Requirements, 1957-1962



Source: Tilman (1964, p. 75)

In 1956, Malays constituted 57.0% of employees in government departments, followed by Indians (27.0%) and Chinese (12.3%) (Figure 5.9). The NEP changed this drastically: by 1999, there was a Malay majority in various professions within the public service (Table 5.3). In a report on the civil service as part of its proposals for the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the Centre for

**Table 5.3: Ethnic Representation in the Civil Service, 30 September 1999**

Service	Malays		Chinese		Indians		Others		Total	% of civil service
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
Diplomatic Service	3,366	85.0%	277	7.0%	238	6.0%	79	2.0%	3,960	26.5%
Accountants	369	73.5%	71	14.1%	13	2.6%	49	9.8%	502	3.4%
Medical	3,579	51.0%	1,473	21.0%	1,614	23.0%	352	5.0%	7,018	47.0%
Engineers	1,945	68.0%	629	22.0%	57	2.0%	230	8.0%	2,861	19.1%
Legal	503	83.0%	42	6.9%	31	5.1%	30	5.0%	606	4.1%
Total	9,762		2,492		1,953		740		14,947	

Source: Tjiptoherijanto (2012)

**Table 5.4: Ethnic Representation in the Civil Service, June 2005**

Service	Top Management		Management & Professional		Support		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Malay	1,370	83.9%	155,871	81.6%	535,495	75.8%	692,736	77.0%
Chinese	151	9.3%	17,896	9.4%	66,248	9.4%	84,295	9.4%
Indian	83	5.1%	9,777	5.1%	36,194	5.1%	46,054	5.1%
Other <i>Bumiputeras</i>	23	1.4%	6,156	3.2%	63,649	9.0%	69,828	7.8%
Others	5	0.3%	1,203	0.6%	5,129	0.7%	6,337	0.7%
Total	1,632		190,903		706,715		899,250	

Source: CPPS (2006)

**Table 5.5: Civil Service Employment and Total Labour Force, 2001-2009**

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total labour force ('000)	9,699.4	9,886.2	10,239.6	10,346.2	10,413.4	10,628.9	10,889.5	11,028.1	11,315.3
Subtotal for civil service	1,346.5	1,361.5	1,478.1	1,493.2	1,548.2	1,497.4	1,587.7	1,660.2	1,817.0
<b>Civil service as % of labour force</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security ('000)	664.6	663.6	666.5	684.3	728.5	674.1	716.1	751.1	813.9
Education ('000)	508.6	508.6	594.3	610.7	607.1	600.1	632.7	656.5	731.4
Health and Social Work ('000)	173.3	189.3	217.3	198.2	212.6	223.2	238.9	252.6	271.7

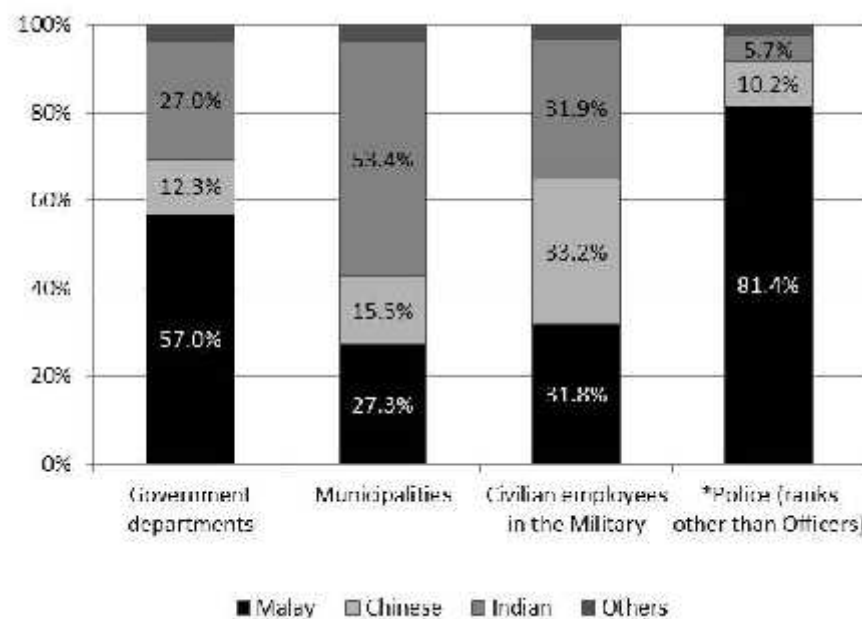
*Notes:*

1. Assumption: "Education" and "Health and Social Work" constitute the civil service, since teachers and medical staff are civil servants. However, the numbers could include non-civil servants.
2. A different industry classification system was used before year 2000, which did not contain the category "Public administration and defence".

Source: DOSM (2012b)

Public Policy Studies (CPPS) (2006) makes three observations: first, the proportion of Malays in the civil service has grown from 60% to 77% since the introduction of the NEP; second, Malay domination is higher in the top management positions (**Table 5.4**); and third, the elite *Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik* (PTD) (i.e. Diplomatic Service) service is 85% Malay. Comparing this to the 2000 census, the report found that the respective ethnic groups' representation in the civil service compared to their population share are: Malays 1.44 times, Chinese 0.36 times, Indians 0.69 times, other *Bumiputeras* 0.66 times, and Others 0.57 times (CPPS, 2006, p. 5).

**Figure 5.9: Civil Service Employees by Ethnic Groups, 1956**



*\* The police force was greatly expanded during the Emergency, the majority of which were filled by Malays.*

Sources: Federation of Malaya. Information Services. (1958b, 1958c)

Wade's (2009) working paper contains more recent statistics showing Malay domination in the civil service. First, he surveys 100 Malaysian overseas missions to ascertain the ethnic proportions amongst diplomatic staff, including military attaches and a few Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board staff. He found that 91.7% of some 700 staff are Malays. Second, he found that 96% of 365 Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage staff are Malays, and 96.8% of administrative officers in the Ministry of Defence (excluding armed forces) are Malays. Third, he surveys the University of Malaya (UM) "Expert Page" and found that out of 1,240 academic staff listed, less than 100 are non-Malay. Specifically, there are 20 Chinese names (8 of whom also have Islamic names), 46 Indian names, and 30 names that were obviously foreign or

otherwise cannot be classified. Fourth, he notes that over the last 50 years there has been a gradual replacement of the originally ethnically diverse judiciary with a Malay majority.

Simply put, if the 1960s can be said to be a period of Malayanisation of the civil service, the post-1990s period has been one of “*Malay*”-isation. This is significant as Malaysia’s civil servant-to-population ratio has been the highest in Asia Pacific since 2009 (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2011b). Furthermore, the civil service represents an approximate average of 14.6% of Malaysia’s labour force from 2000 to 2009 (**Table 5.5**). As I will explain in **Section 5.3**, the Malay dominance in the civil service also has implications on electoral voting and the continued political power of the ruling coalition.

### **Government Scholarships**

Since the colonial period, there has been a practice of sending students for overseas education as part of their training for civil service jobs (see Malaya, 1949a, p. 96). Thus, there has been a tradition of a direct and explicit link between government scholarships and an ensured entry into the civil service. Jones (1953, pp. 92-93), for example, observes this of the Kedah state while it was part of the UMS:

*Of all the Malay States Kedah seemed to have the clearest perception of the policies it judged best for a Malay State within the British sphere of influence. It employed far fewer British officials than the States to the south and none at all in the district administration, the Customs, and the Co-operative Department. The subordinate staffs were almost entirely Malay, the few Chinese and Indians in government service being either survivals of a phase when the outlook was less nationalistic or irreplaceable in the conduct of such offices as those of the Protector of Chinese or the Deputy Controller of Labour. Many of the senior appointments, especially in the technical departments, were beyond the capacity of the Malays but for some years the Government had been sending their most promising youths abroad for an education which would, it was hoped, set them on the way towards filling those appointments. The ambition of the Government was as sensible as it was definite; it was to set up a Malay State which should be a model in its purely Malay administration and in its promotion of the well-being of its Malay population along the historic lines of Malay economy.*

This tradition of government-scholarship-to-civil-service continued into post-colonial Malaysia. One of the most sought-after and competitive government scholarships is the JPA Scholarship administered by *Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam* (JPA), i.e. the Public Service Department.<sup>63</sup> Students on JPA scholarships are either sent to overseas or local Malaysian universities (from July 2009 onwards), and are required to serve in the civil service for a period of six to ten years after graduation. Over the years, the number of overseas scholarships awarded annually has

<sup>63</sup> Other public scholarships are offered by government agencies or government-linked companies.

increased from 500 to 2,000, before stabilising at 1,500 since 2010 (Wee, 2010). The number of applicants, however, has been increasing: 15,357 in 2005 (Malaysia, 2006, p. 84), 15,200 in 2008, (Wan, 2011), 18,800 in 2011 (JPA, 2010), and 16,900 in 2013 (*The Malaysian Insider*, 2011a). From 2000 to 2008, JPA sponsored over RM2.8 billion (US\$9.13 billion) in overseas scholarships, which increased from RM109 million (US\$414.2 million) in 2000 to RM659 million (US\$2.14 billion) in 2008 (**Table 5.6**).

**Table 5.6: JPA Scholarships Awarded for Overseas Education, 2000-2008**

Year	<i>Bumiputera</i>		<i>Non-Bumiputera</i>		Total number	Sponsorship amount (million RM)
	N	%	N	%		
2000	598	79.9%	150	20.1%	748	109
2001	609	80.0%	152	20.0%	761	96
2002	999	80.0%	250	20.0%	1,249	116
2003	1,314	80.0%	329	20.0%	1,643	253
2004	1,187	80.0%	297	20.0%	1,484	281
2005	1,040	80.0%	260	20.0%	1,300	391
2006	1,143	76.2%	357	23.8%	1,500	436
2007	1,170	65.0%	630	35.0%	1,800	461
2008	1,100	55.0%	900	45.0%	2,000	659

Source: Malaysia (2009b, p. 4)

In line with the NEP, JPA Scholarships are subjected to *Bumiputera* quotas. In June 2009, it was announced in Parliament that the scholarship scheme for overseas education will undergo changes to address the “imbalance in scholarship applications”: first, there will be four categories of awards with different evaluation criteria (**Table 5.7**);<sup>64</sup> and second, the scholarships will be offered based on the following considerations (Malaysia, 2009b, my translation):

- (i) *Human capital development emphasising knowledge, skills, intellectual capital including science, technology, entrepreneurialism, progressive attitude and high moral ethics;*
- (ii) *Importance of national integration and unity for national harmony and prosperity;*
- (iii) *Education as an agenda to improve socio-economic standards, and to restructure the national labour force that reflects a multi-ethnic society.*

The emphasis on “national integration and unity” is a recurrent theme in the post-colonial Malaysian state’s policies, a point I will return to in **Section 5.2**.

<sup>64</sup> In 2005, applications were evaluated based on 65% academic grades, 10% co-curriculum activities, 10% income, and 15% interview performance (Malaysia, 2006, p. 83).

**Table 5.7: Categories of JPA Overseas Scholarships, 2009 onwards**

Category	No. of scholarships (% of total offered)	Evaluation criteria
Academic excellence	300 (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 85% academic excellence</li> <li>• 10% co-curriculum activities</li> <li>• 5% interview performance</li> </ul>
Racial composition of the population	600 (60%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% academic excellence</li> <li>• 10% co-curriculum activities</li> <li>• 10% socio-economic background</li> <li>• 10% interview performance</li> </ul>
<i>Bumiputera</i> from Sabah and Sarawak	150 (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65% academic excellence</li> <li>• 5% co-curriculum activities</li> </ul>
Socially disadvantaged group	150 (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% socio-economic background</li> <li>• 5% interview performance</li> </ul>

Source: JPA (2010)

Although non-*Bumiputera* share of scholarship holders have increased from 20% to 45% (**Table 5.6**), there are inherent problems in the scholarship scheme. Wan (2011) points out that the scheme suffers from “fuzzy and overlapping objectives” as it amalgamates merit-based, career-based (i.e. training towards a particular profession), student-specific (e.g. targeting a particular ethnic group), and needs-based considerations. Indeed, the evaluation criteria emphasises “academic excellence” across all four categories. However, “academic excellence” is defined solely by academic performance in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) examination, a leaving school examination taken at the end of Form Five. The SPM examination has suffered from highly inflated grades to such an extent that 6,277 students out of a 400,000 cohort in 2008 scored straight A’s. Thus, there have been numerous cases of complaints of straight-A students not securing public university places, let alone government scholarships.

As a result, students denied entries into public universities have had to turn to private universities and colleges, or privately-funded overseas education. Given the fact that the JPA Scholarship is a means of recruitment into the civil service, the limited nature of the scholarship award indirectly affects the civil service as a potential graduate career option. This is especially significant for non-*Bumiputeras* and non-Malays, who face restricted access at three stages: firstly, pre-university education; secondly, government scholarships and public university education; and thirdly, recruitment into the civil service. This has implications on mobile Malaysians’ migration trajectories, as I will explain in **Chapter 7**.



## **5.2 Focusing on National Unity and Loyalty**

### **5.2.1 National Unity as Antidote to Racial Issues**

*From the point of view of the Malay political elite, identification with the nation, that is, Malaysia, must supersede all other loyalties, including ethnic, linguistic and religious attachments.*

Reid (1988, p. 26)

Since the May 1969 incident, racial tensions have been perceived as a threat to national security and multi-ethnic harmony. The post-colonial Malaysian government saw national unity as an antidote to racial problems. It was rationalised that racial tensions arose because each ethnic community maintained its own ethnic group interests at the expense of a pan-Malaysian national interest. Thus, the post-colonial Malaysian government undertook various strategies to *govern, educate, and motivate* its citizenry towards national unity. In line with this is an emphasis on cultivating a sense of national loyalty. By extension, certain actions such as emigration or political dissent were labelled as acts of disloyalty.

I argue that these strategies adopted by the post-colonial Malaysian government are an extension of, as well as a development from, legacies inherited from the British colonial government. By legacies, I mean both the *material* inheritance of legislations and socio-economic-political conditions, as well as the *immaterial* inheritance of techniques of governing. The former can be seen as results of the British “divide-and-rule” policy which seeded social stratification along racial lines, and nurtured the new English-educated Malay elite class who would constitute the post-colonial Malaysian government. The latter includes the authoritative political crackdown legitimised through the discourse of national security, as well as the “politics of compromise” (Sharifah Sofia Wan-Ahmad, 2010, p. 14) between the coalition partners.

First, legislations were used to instil a sense of fear amongst the citizenry. This is similar to the British colonial government’s criminalising of anti-colonial struggles as communist terrorism, and the subsequent use of Emergency powers to curb political discontent. Second, attempts were made to instil a sense of national unity through unifying the education system and introducing a common national culture. However, these attempts have not been smooth because of the disparate education systems inherited from the British colonial era. This is further exacerbated by the vehement guarding of vernacular education, language and culture

by each ethnic community as an indirect consequence of the British colonial “divide-and-rule” strategy.

Analysed on its own, national education strategies may not be effective in achieving the aim of a common education system and national culture that is readily accepted by all ethnic communities. However, when this is examined in relation to other government machineries such as legislation and manipulation of the electoral system (**Section 5.3.2**), one can see how the post-colonial Malaysian government has been able to implement policies to the benefit of the ruling coalition’s political position. Third, economic development programmes were introduced as a form of economic nationalism strategy. However, because social stratification within the Malaysian society had developed as a result of British colonial interventions, these programmes could never explicitly address “race” as a factor, and instead had to resort to vague goals set into the future. In other words, the British colonial period created “race” as a problem, yet leaving the post-colonial Malaysian government with limited means to resolve “racial” problems.

### **5.2.2 Governing the Citizenry**

Following the British colonial government’s stance on criminalising anti-government activities, the post-colonial Malaysian state utilised techniques of governing to control its citizenry in the name of national security. First, the Internal Security Act (ISA), originally a preventive detention legislation to curb communist activities has been opportunistically used to curb anti-government struggles. Second, warnings and reprimands targeted at university students serve to govern students from engaging in political activities – and more importantly, the emergence of civil society awareness and alternative voices. Third, emigration has been constructed as an act of disloyalty. Taken altogether, these acts of governing indirectly strengthen the political power of the post-colonial Malaysian government.

#### **Internal Security Act (ISA)**

During the post-1969 period, the fear of racial riots led to further legislations to curb any activities with the potential to result in racial tensions. Unfortunately, and taking a similar approach as the British colonial administration, this has been viewed as a *national security* issue. As I have explained in **Section 4.3.1**, the British colonial government had labelled anti-colonial movements as communist terrorist insurgency. Likewise, the post-colonial Malaysian government has also labelled anti-government movements as instigations of racial tensions

threatening national security. On the one hand, “race” became a sensitised and securitised issue. This is further worsened as “race” and any “race”-related issues are prohibited from open debates constitutionally. On the other hand, legal enactments introduced to securitise “race” became a means of anti-government control. One such legislation is the Internal Security Act (ISA) (1960).

The ISA, a preventive detention law, was originally enacted under Article 149 of the Federal Constitution to curb MCP activities after the end of the Emergency period.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the law originally specified acts threatening national security such as communism and militancy.<sup>66</sup> As the then Deputy Prime Minister, Razak, explained in Parliament (Federation of Malaya., 1961, p. 1185):

*The Hon’ble Prime Minister and other Members of the Government, including myself, have made it quite clear on a number of occasions that, because the Emergency is to be declared at an end, the Government does not intend to relax its vigilance against the evil enemy who still remains as a threat on our border and who is now attempting by subversion to succeed where he has failed by force of arms. It is for this reason that this Bill is before the House. It has two main aims: firstly to counter subversion throughout the country and, secondly, to enable the necessary measures to be taken on the border area to counter terrorism.*

He goes on to explain that the purpose of the ISA is to safeguard national security and not to “hinder healthy democratic opposition” (Federation of Malaya., 1961, p. 1188). Thus, a person would be detained “for what is considered he may reasonably be expected to do” that “represents a risk to the security of the country” (Federation of Malaya., 1961, p. 1188). As I will explain, it is this nebulous definition of “risk to national security”, as well as the “reasonably expected intention” of a suspect that accords controversy to the ISA.

The ISA empowers the police to arrest anyone who “has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in a manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any part thereof or to the maintenance of essential services therein or to the economic life thereof” (Malaysia, 1972, p. 61). Suspects may be detained for up to 60 days initially. The period of detention is extendable to two years without trial, after which detention may be extended indefinitely at two-year increments on grounds that may differ from that cited in the original order. Persons detained under the ISA have no recourse to ordinary judicial remedies. While they can make

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<sup>65</sup> The 1948 Emergency Ordinance was abolished on 31 July 1960. The ISA came into effect on 1 August 1960. The ISA was extended to Singapore when she joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Singapore’s ISA is in existence till today.

<sup>66</sup> After the May 13 riots, the ISA’s scope was expanded to include inter-racial harmony (Sharifah Sofia Wan-Ahmad, 2010, p. 27).

representations to an Advisory Board which reports to the Cabinet, the review process is highly contentious. For example, the Board is often “denied access to detailed evidence by the Special Branch on the grounds of “national security”” (Amnesty International., 1979, p. 3).

Since the enactment of the ISA, more than 10,000 arrests have been made (**Table 5.8**). The most notable mass arrest occurred on 27 October 1987, known as *Operasi Lalang* (lit. “Weeding Operation”), which involved the arrests of 106 persons and the revoking of publishing licenses of two dailies, *The Star* and the *Sin Chiew Jit Poh* and two weeklies, *The Sunday Star* and *Watan*. This political crackdown is “widely regarded ... as the most egregious and self-serving use” of the ISA (Lee, 2008, p. 605).

**Table 5.8: Internal Security Act (ISA) Arrests, 1960-2001**

Years	Arrests	Detention Orders	Restricted Orders
1960-1969	1,605	1,119	351
1970-1979	6,328	1,713	1,389
1980-1989	1,346	559	280
1990-1999	1,066	680	32
2000-2001	159	70	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,504</b>	<b>4,218</b>	<b>2,061</b>

Source: Koh (2004, p. 323)

According to the White Paper (Malaysia. Ministry of Home Affairs., 1988) explaining the arrests, these groups “exploited various sensitive issues and inflamed communal sentiments” (p. 6), thus it was necessary for the government to act “swiftly and firmly to contain the situation in the interests of stability and welfare of the people” (p. 5). Significantly, the paper stated that “[c]ommunal issues and problems ... continued and at times led to the outbreak of serious racial disturbances such as the 13 May 1969 incident, a tragic episode in the history of independent Malaysia” (p. 1). Here, again, the May 1969 incident has been invoked as a negative outcome of racial tensions, to be avoided at all costs.

Fritz and Flaherty (2003, p. 1346) note that the ISA has been used “to delegitimize generations of political opposition and silence those considered “deviant” or “subversive” by the government.” Lee (2002, p. 71) observes that the ISA is an “all-encompassing piece of legislation” that is wide in scope but yet narrow in recourse from its imposition. The Freedom House (2013) notes that the ISA has been used to imprison “mainstream politicians, alleged Islamist militants, trade unionists, suspected communist activists, ordinary criminal suspects, and members of “deviant” Muslim sects”. The report also notes that although the ISA was

replaced with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA) in June 2012, the definition of “security offences” remains broad and subject to authorities’ interpretations.

It is interesting to note similar parallels in Singapore. On 2 February 1963, 133 persons who opposed Singapore’s merger with Malaysia were arrested under Singapore’s ISA in Operation Coldstore. On 21 May 1987, 16 individuals, alleged to be Marxist conspirators, were arrested under Operation Spectrum in Singapore. Another six individuals were arrested on 20 June 1987. About four months later, *Operasi Lalang* took place in Malaysia, alleging that “The Marxist Group” used Liberation Theology to influence the masses for radical change.

Loh, Liao, Lim, and Seng (2013, p. 195) notes that Operation Coldstore was actually a political manoeuvre orchestrated by “a tripartite of anti-communist actors” – Britain, the People’s Action Party (PAP) of Singapore, and the Alliance government of Malaysia – in the shaping of post-colonial geopolitics in the region. Indeed, the origin, development and usage of the ISA in Malaysia and Singapore echoed the British colonial government’s handling of “communist insurgency” during the Emergency. For this reason, I argue that the ISA embodies the British colonial government’s authoritative crackdown on anti-government struggles, articulated in the name of curbing racial tensions in order to protect national security. In other words, the ISA and the securitising of “race” is a British colonial legacy inherited and subsequently expanded by the post-colonial Malaysian government.

These political democracy and human rights criticisms of the ISA have been plentiful. However, my purpose here is to show how the post-colonial Malaysian government utilised legislations *to securitise “race” in the name of national security*. Subsequently, legislation curbing *potential* acts that *could* incite racial sentiments evolved to become a weapon for anti-government control. While the British colonial period materialised “race” as a categorical factor for social stratification and equated “communism” (i.e. anti-colonial struggles) to terrorism, “race” in post-colonial Malaysia has been elevated to a level of national threat. Furthermore, the nebulous space surrounding the definition of “risk to national security” opens up the space for subjective interpretations of what constitutes a threat to “racial” harmony. The ISA might appear to be a piece of preventive detention legislation. However, its existence and the possibility of its use on any Malaysian citizen suspected of threatening national security is of significance to Malaysia’s citizenship habitus.

**Warnings against Student Participation in Political Activities**

Political control is also extended to students. Malaysian students studying in overseas universities under government scholarships have been warned against participation in political activities and demonstrations. In April 2012, the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (*Bersih*), a coalition comprising about 60 civil society organisations and supported by three main opposition political parties, called for a global “Walk for Democracy” to petition the Election Commission of Malaysia (SPR) for a free and fair election process.<sup>67</sup> Two days prior to the event, an email circular was sent to JPA scholarship holders in a city in the USA (personal communication). The email reminded them:

*Please think and use your wisdom carefully before making any rash action that could affect your own self, sponsoring department and nation in general. Refrain yourself from joining, conspiring or contributing in whatever ways to any activities that may be considered detrimental to the government and nation. Instead, your full concentration and energy should be channelled to obliging the contents in [the Federal Scholarship Agreement].*

*In reiteration, please do not repudiate all the privileges afforded upon you thus far as whoever violates the stipulated contract is at your own serious peril.*

The implicit message in the email is that participation in any form of democratic activities deemed to be anti-government is a violation of scholarship obligations. Furthermore, there is a deliberate conflation of “government” and “nation” as one and the same. JPA scholars are also reminded of their privileged positions that would be jeopardised should they violate their scholarship obligations.

Such warnings were not only targeted at government scholarship holders. Prior to a scheduled demonstration on 12 January 2013 at the Malaysian High Commission in London, a similar message was announced on the Education Malaysia UK and Ireland website. The message (Education Malaysia UK & Ire., 2013b, my translation) read:

*Education Malaysia UK & Ire wish to advise all Malaysian students not to get involved in or participate in the demonstration directly or indirectly.*

...

*Every Malaysian student in UK and Ireland should remember the importance and their main purpose here, and to uphold their conduct as a Malaysian citizen and the responsibility to take care of the country's image.*

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<sup>67</sup> Formed in November 2006, *Bersih* has initiated three public demonstrations to date: *Bersih 1.0* in Kuala Lumpur on 10 November 2007; *Bersih 2.0* on 9 July 2011 in 38 cities worldwide; and *Bersih 3.0* on 28 April 2012 in 35 countries and 85 locations.

Although this message was not as reprimanding as the circular to JPA scholars, there are similar parallels. First, students are reminded that they are first and foremost *students* and should therefore only focus on their studies. Second, overseas students are reminded that they are *Malaysian citizens* and ambassadors of the country while overseas. This suggests that they should not participate in any kind of demonstrations against the Malaysian government as this would tarnish the country's image in the international arena.

A further message from the Director of the organisation (Education Malaysia UK & Eire, 2013a) less than a week later repeated the same cautionary note as the email to JPA scholars:

*All of the Malaysian students in UK & Ireland are also reminded to do not have the intention, plan, organize or involve in any activity prohibited by the sponsorship parties or the government, either in the abroad or in our homeland, Malaysia. If you are caught and found guilty, it brings bad consequences to you and this also troubles others parties, including yourself, your families and the communities. More importantly, this matter may affect you future and your studies, in which it is still need to be pursued.*<sup>68</sup>

Here again, implicit suggestions of “bad consequences” as a result of “any activity prohibited” serve as warnings against political participation.

Finally, a student activist in Malaysia, Adam Adli, was arrested on 18 May 2013 under Section 4 of the Sedition Act. It was believed that he was arrested over his remarks during a post-election forum on 13 May 2013, where he called for a massive street rally over alleged electoral fraud during the 13th General Election. If found guilty for seditious acts, he could be imprisoned for up to three years. At the time of writing, he has been suspended from his university studies, detained for interrogations, and charged with sedition in court.

These three examples demonstrate how the post-colonial Malaysian government attempts to curb political activities amongst Malaysian students. In the soft approach, warning emails and messages remind students of their obligation and responsibility as students and Malaysian citizens. In the hard approach, arrest and detention under existing legislation serve to punish any non-complying student. This can also be seen as a reminder to curb any potential student activist participation in the future.

### **Emigration as Disloyalty**

Malaysia does not recognise dual citizenship. In negotiating the privileges and obligations of citizenship during the 1940s-1950s, the issue of allegiance and loyalty was frequently invoked.

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<sup>68</sup> Cited without alteration, including grammatical mistakes.

Indeed, the MU citizenship proposal was itself premised upon “all those who regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty”. When the pro-Malays protested the idea of common and equal citizenship rights, the main reason provided was that “the Malays can have no other object of loyalty than Malaya” (Jones, 1946). This suggests that non-Malays – in particular Chinese and Indian “immigrants” – had other objects of loyalty. Thus, Malaysia’s citizenship is one that is strongly associated with a sense of exclusivity, loyalty and patriotism.

Indeed, such sentiments have persisted till today. As a newspaper article notes (*The Star*, 2007c):

*To many Malaysians, citizenship is entwined with the idea of loyalty. To give up one’s citizenship is seen by both the authorities and society as akin to renouncing one’s love for one’s native land. In their eyes, citizenship is a privilege not to be trifled with.*

However, the equating of citizenship with loyalty – and therefore emigration as disloyalty – did not come about naturally. The Malays believe in *ketuanan Melayu* (literally “Malay sovereignty” or “Malay supremacy”) and that non-Malays are *pendatang* (literally “newcomer”, used in reference to “immigrants” or “sojourners”) or *penumpang* (literally “squatters”). In popular discourse propagated by some Malaysian politicians, the term *pendatang* has been tinged with negative connotations: disloyal and opportunistic immigrants who scheme to take away what should rightly be the “indigenous” Malays’. For example, the fourth Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (hereafter “Mahathir”) famously wrote that the Malays are the “definitive people”, i.e. “those who set up the first governments ... with which other countries did official business and had diplomatic relations” (Mahathir Mohamad, 1970, p. 126). He further argues that since the British dealt with Malayan affairs through the Malay Sultanates and the Malays – not through the aborigines – therefore the Malays are “the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country” (p. 133).

In a similar vein, Malaysians who chose to emigrate and renounce their Malaysian citizenship have been viewed as disloyal citizens who have jumped ship. Even overseas students who have chosen to remain in their host countries and not return to Malaysia after graduation have been branded as disloyal (Minister of Higher Education, quoted in *New Straits Times*, 2006). Malaysia’s fifth Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi has commented that “[t]hose who have given up their citizenship cannot get it back if they suddenly want to become Malaysians again” (quoted in *The Star*, 2007a). These sentiments reinforce the perception that renunciation of the Malaysian citizenship is a final, disloyal and irreversible act.



Most recently, the newly-appointed Home Minister wrote that those who are unhappy with Malaysia's first-past-the-post electoral system should emigrate to countries adopting other electoral systems to pursue their political ideologies (*Utusan Melayu*, 2013, my translation). Furthermore, he emphasised that:

*Malaysia is not a country for them to interpret their political ideologies. In fact, if they are truly loyal citizens to this country, they should accept the existing political and government system enshrined in the Federal Constitution.*

This suggests that any act that is not in line with government policies or the status quo is an act of disloyalty in the eyes of the post-colonial Malaysian state.

Indeed, Chai (1977, p. 73) observes that

*[t]he younger generation Chinese and Indians still carry the burden of proving their political loyalty to the nation even though they may be citizens, so that any expression of social unrest is apt to convey the impression that they are disloyal.*

From 2000 to 2006, 14,316 Chinese (87%) renounced their Malaysian citizenship compared to 1,098 Malays (6.6%), 822 Indians (5%) and 238 other ethnic groups (*Malaysiakini*, 2007). Out of 106,003 Malaysians who emigrated since Independence to 2007, 86,078 are Chinese (81.2%), 10,411 are Malays (9.8%), 8,667 are Indians (8.1%), and 847 other ethnic groups (0.8%) (*The Star*, 2007b). Since the majority of Malaysian emigrants are non-*Bumiputeras* (especially Chinese), they also bear the burden of being labelled as disloyal Malaysians who have turned their back against the country. This criminalising of emigrants echoes the earlier criminalising of political dissenters and "communists". In other words, it has become an implicit "truth" that anyone who does not agree with and/or conform to the post-colonial Malaysian government is disloyal and should emigrate because Malaysia cannot tolerate their alternative views that could jeopardise "national unity".

### **5.2.3 Educating the Citizenry**

Education and a common national culture have been seen as a means to achieve national unity. As a result of legacies of the British colonial period and the political bargain during independence, Malaysia's school system consists of national schools and national-type schools preserving the respective vernacular language and cultural education to a certain extent. Thus, attempts to introduce a Malay-based national culture have not gone down well with non-Malay communities. The development of a national curriculum in line with fundamental values of the *Rukunegara* serves to promote and instil a sense of common culture and homogenous national consciousness. In particular, patriotism and a sense of undivided loyalty to the country are explicitly expressed and fostered.

**Rukunegara and National Cultural Policy**

On the one hand, legislation and warnings were used as governing strategies to curb political dissent. On the other hand, education strategies were adopted to cultivate a Malaysian national consciousness with shared values for the multi-ethnic population. In July 1969, the Department of National Unity was created and tasked to formulate a national ideology. On 31 August 1970, the *Rukunegara* (lit. “Articles of Faith of the State”) was proclaimed. It states that:

*Our nation, Malaysia, being dedicated to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared; to ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions; to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology;*

*We, her people, pledge our united efforts to attain those ends guided by these principles:*

*Belief in God  
Loyalty to King and Country<sup>69</sup>  
Upholding the Constitution  
Rule of Law  
Good Behaviour and Morality*

Malaysia (1971, p. 6)

Parallel to this, the National Cultural Policy was conceived to create “a national identity of one culture, one language, and one citizenry” (Chin, 2000, p. 1043), albeit with the Malay culture as its fundamental core. Although the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports claimed that the policy was conceived at the 1971 National Culture Congress, non-Malay communities disputed its legitimacy during the 1980s when the Ministry solicited feedback from all communities for a ten-year review. The Chinese community contested the “Three Principles” of the National Culture, namely that it must be firstly based on the indigenous culture; secondly, suitable elements from other cultures can be accepted as part of the National Culture; and finally, Islam is an important part in shaping the National Culture (Kua, 1985, p. 2).

Both the Chinese and Indian communities issued memorandums in 1983 and 1984 respectively, requesting for a common national culture that is not equated to Malay or Islamic culture. In addition, both communities highlighted the government’s neglect of Chinese and Indian language and education, as well as incorporation of non-Malay artistic and cultural heritage

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<sup>69</sup> During a short visit to KL in March 2013, I saw a big lit-up sign of “Loyalty to King and Country” in Malay displayed prominently across the expressway. This shows the continual reminding of the importance of national loyalty.

into the Malaysian national culture (The 10 Major Indian Associations of Malaysia, 1985; The Major Chinese Organisations in Malaysia, 1985). In general, the non-Malay communities insisted that the national culture should reflect Malaysia's cultural diversity, common values and most importantly, be Malaysian-oriented.

The controversies of the National Cultural Policy demonstrated the challenge of creating a "national identity" that is equally acceptable to each of Malaysia's multi-ethnic communities without stepping on another ethnic group's toes. The National Cultural Policy remains a blueprint that was never implemented (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 1999, p. 139). Like the promise to review the Malays' special rights 15 years after independence, this was left hanging and unresolved.

Thus, two paradoxical approaches towards achieving national unity existed at the same time. On the one hand, the NOC's constitutional amendments reinforced and protected the Malays' privileged status over other non-Malay citizens; and removed the possibility of public discussion of matters pertaining to racial politics, citizenship and Malay rights. On the other hand, the *Rukunegara* offered a neutral, *de*-racialised set of principles for the construction of a Malaysian national identity. Hence, the crucial period of 1969 to 1971 cast the foundations of an ambiguous Malaysian national consciousness that is somewhat conflated with citizenship. It was also during this time that the government gained the power to prohibit any (racially) sensitive issues that are perceived to "directly, or indirectly challenge political stability" (Mariappan, 2002, p. 210).

### **National Education Policies**

Prior to Malaysia's independence, there was no standardised national education policy. Following the British colonial administration's "divide-and-rule" policy towards the multi-ethnic society and *laissez faire* approach towards education, children of Chinese and Indian immigrants were allowed to go through vernacular education in their mother tongues. Thus, Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil schools adopted their respective medium of instruction and curricula. At the time of independence, there were 2,144 national primary schools, 1,275 Chinese primary schools, and 898 Tamil primary schools (Raman & Sua, 2010, p. 119).

After independence, there was increased awareness for the need for a common education system. This also followed close monitoring of communism and anti-colonial activities in Chinese vernacular schools throughout the 1950s. The resultant Razak Report 1956 and

Rahman Talib Report 1960 established the principles for a unified national education system incorporating national characteristics, captured in the Education Act of 1961. Consequently, Malay medium primary schools were renamed *Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan* (national primary schools), while English, Chinese and Tamil primary schools were renamed *Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan* (national-type schools). Malay was the medium of instruction in national schools, while English and the respective vernacular languages were the medium of instruction in national-type schools. Malay, the national language, was made a compulsory subject.

In 1968, English national-type schools were converted to national schools in phases. These efforts resulted in a streamlining of the education streams, especially towards integrating the separate vernacular primary school graduates into a unified secondary school system. This is evident in the comparison between that in 1930s British Malaya (**Figure 4.5**) to that in 1958 Federation of Malaya (**Figure 5.10**).

**Figure 5.10: The Malayan School System, 1958**



Source: Federation of Malaya. Information Services (1958a)

As Chai (1971, p. 37) notes, the underlying rationale for Malaysia's national education policy is that a common syllabus and medium of instruction (i.e. the Malay national language) would firstly promote a nationally homogenous outlook; secondly, lead to a common culture; and thirdly, provide the basis for social cohesion and national unity. Indeed, this is evident in key

policy areas implemented through various education acts (**Table 5.9**). This has also been subsequently articulated in Malaysia's National Education Philosophy, proclaimed in 1988:

*Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.*

MOE (2012b)

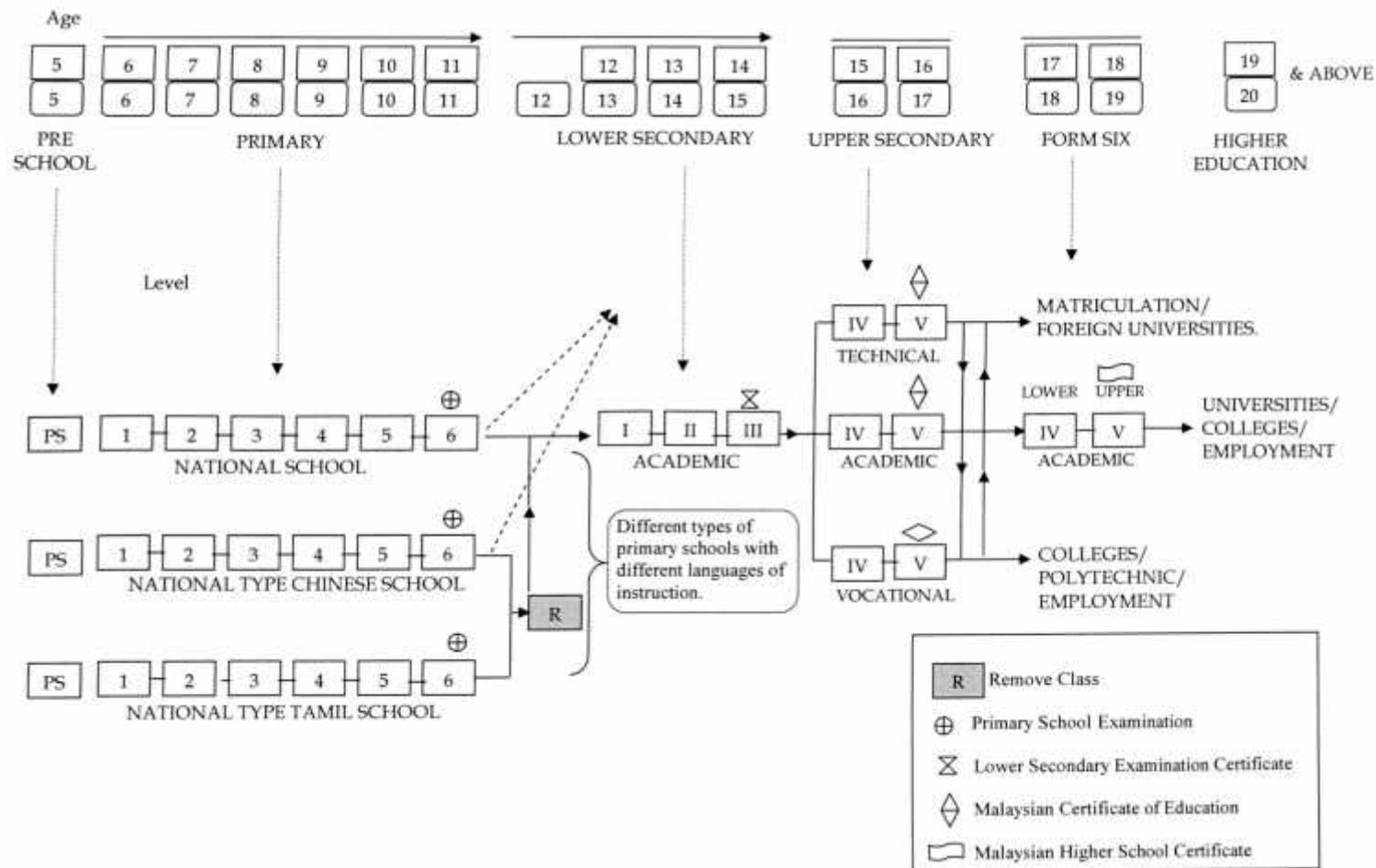
**Table 5.9: Key Education Policies Relating to National Unity**

Education Acts and Reports	Key policy areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report of the Education Committee, 1956 (Razak Report)</li> <li>- Education Ordinance, 1957</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A national education system</li> <li>- Malay as the key medium of instruction</li> <li>- A Malaysian environment oriented curriculum</li> <li>- A common system of examination</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report of the Education Review Committee, 1960 (Rahman Talib Report)</li> <li>- Education Act, 1961</li> <li>- Cabinet Committee Report on Review of Implementation of Education Policies, 1979 (Mahathir Report)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strong spiritual education and the desired disciplinary elements</li> <li>- A Malaysian oriented curriculum</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Language Act, 1967</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malay as the only national and official language of Malaysia</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education Bill, 1995</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A national education system to achieve national aspirations through world-class quality education</li> <li>- National Education Philosophy as the basis for national education policy</li> <li>- Pre-school education as part of the national education system</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education Act, 1996</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All schools to use the national curriculum and prepare students for common public examinations</li> <li>- To use the national language as a medium of instruction in all educational institutes in the national education system (except national-type schools or other educational institutes exempted by the Ministry of Education)</li> </ul>

Sources: IBE (2012); Hazri Jamil (2007); MOE (2012a)

To further align the education system towards achieving national unity, a common national curriculum known as *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR) (Integrated Primary School Curriculum) was introduced in 1983 and institutionalised across all national and national-type

Figure 5.11: Malaysia's Education System



*Note: The one-year preparatory "Remove Class" is introduced to transition students from national-type primary schools into the integrated national secondary school system.*

Source: Hazri Jamil (2007, p. 187)

primary schools. Muslim students were taught Islamic Religious Knowledge, while non-Muslim students were taught Moral Education (MOE, 1984, p. 28). The common curriculum extended to secondary schools in 1988 with the introduction of *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum). The Textbook Bureau, established in 1967, ensured that textbooks are written to “fulfil the needs and aspirations of the *Rukunegara*” (Mustafa Kamal Anuar, 1990, p. 100). **Figure 5.11** shows the various routes and integration points within Malaysia’s education system.

Hence, while the national curriculum may express a focus on developing responsible individuals, this was done to meet the ultimate aim of national unity and encouraging contributions towards nation-building. Indeed, the importance of patriotism and loyalty to the country are emphasised, as can be seen in a 1994 professional circular to all State Education Directors (MOE, 1994, my translation):

*The spirit of Patriotism is the essence of a country’s integrity and the wellbeing of its people. Inculcating the spirit of Patriotism is part of an integrated and comprehensive education. As the people/citizens of Malaysia, each school administrator, teacher and student must adopt a serious attitude towards the issue of loyalty and undivided love for the country.*

### **Lagu Setia**

To further instil national allegiance, the post-colonial Malaysian government also introduced *Lagu Setia* (lit. “Loyalty Song”) in the 1990s (my translation):<sup>70</sup>

*For our beloved nation  
I pour my complete and loyal devotion  
For our much lauded Sultans/kings  
Allegiance and loyalty can never be divided  
To our leaders and to the people  
Service is rendered in full obedience  
Working together, striving together  
In faithful service to all  
I am willing to sacrifice anything  
To maintain and protect the nation’s trust  
We vow our absolute allegiance  
To our faith/religion, nation/race and country  
LOYALTY*

The song evokes loyalty at the *national* scale and attempts to transcend ethnic differences amongst the Malaysian populace. Yet, the lyrics allude to objects of allegiance grounded in Malay traditional cultural values – firstly, the Malay Sultan; secondly, absolute obedience and

<sup>70</sup> See Kessler (1992) for Malay text and alternative translation.

loyalty to those in positions of power, and thirdly, the importance of religion. In addition, conflation of race, nation and country continues to perpetuate the sense of ambiguity surrounding the Malaysian national identity.

#### **5.2.4 Motivating the Citizenry**

From the 1990s, the Malaysian government adjusted constructions of the Malaysian national identity to suit social, economic and political demands at national, regional and international scales. Mahathir focused the nation's attention on national economic development through grand projects and massive privatisation programmes. Similarly, national economic transformation programmes introduced by the sixth Prime Minister, Najib Razak (hereafter "Najib") continued to place the nation's focus firmly on the promise of a developed and inclusive country set in the future. As Williamson (2002, p. 419) suggests, "[t]he power of the Malaysian state derives from its ability to define the Malaysian national body as something primarily set in the future".

#### **Wawasan 2020, Bangsa Malaysia and the National Development Policy (NDP)**

*There can be no fully developed Malaysia until we have finally overcome the nine central strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation. The first of these is the challenge of establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation with a sense of common and shared destiny, this must be a nation at peace with itself territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one Bangsa Malaysia with political loyalty and dedication to the nation.*

Mahathir, quoted in Cheah (2002, p. 185)

In the 1990s, the Malaysian government began to make adjustments to "national identity" to suit pressures and demands for national economic development. In 1991, Mahathir announced his *Wawasan 2020* (literally "Vision 2020") plan, aimed at Malaysia achieving the status of a "fully developed country" by the year 2020. Under this plan, Mahathir introduced the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* (lit. "The Malaysian Nation"), effectively shifting the national culture ideology from one of cultural assimilation to cultural integration (Chin, 2000).

In his opening statement for *Wawasan 2020*, Mahathir (1991) proclaimed that:

*By the year 2020, Malaysia is to be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal,*



*caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.*

Despite calling for a united Malaysian society, Mahathir's National Development Policy (NDP), implemented from 1990, revived the NEP's *Bumiputera*-centric (or Malay-centric) focus through the strategy of privatisation. The NDP focused primarily on economic modernisation through firstly, private-sector growth; secondly, elimination of serious poverty; thirdly, expanding the development of *Bumiputera* Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC); and fourthly, human resource development. The BCIC was introduced to develop entrepreneurship amongst *Bumiputeras*, offering various forms of support such as finance, training, marketing and technology (Faridah Shahadan, 2001).

With his "Look East" policy and "Malaysia Incorporated" (or "Malaysia, Inc.") slogan, Mahathir advocated the adoption of East Asian industrialisation models. Mahathir also initiated various large-scale national economic development projects that served to propagate a Malaysian economic nationalism. These included the Proton Saga (Malaysia's first national car), the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the Petronas Twin Towers (the world's tallest building in its time) and the new Cyberjaya city including the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).<sup>71</sup> These projects served to instil a sense of Malaysian national pride and patriotism in line with Mahathir's "*Malaysia Boleh!*" (literally "Malaysia is capable!", or "Malaysia can!") campaign, and to place Malaysia on the international arena.

### **1Malaysia and the New Economic Model (NEM)**

*What makes Malaysia unique is the diversity of our peoples. 1Malaysia's goal is to preserve and enhance this unity in diversity which has always been our strength and remains our best hope for the future. ... I encourage each of you to join me in defining our Malaysia and the role we must play in its future. Each of us – despite our differences – shares a desire for a better tomorrow. Each of us wants opportunity, respect, friendship, and understanding.*

Najib Razak (2010)

Najib continues the Malaysian national development project and Mahathir's *Wawasan 2020* along three prongs: firstly, his *1Malaysia* concept sets out the overarching approach towards "national inclusion" by evoking a pan-Malaysian nationalism; secondly, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) focuses on reforming government institutions; and thirdly,

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<sup>71</sup> See Bunnell's (2002) analysis of the MSC as an example of how the Malaysian state reconfigures national identity by capitalising on the transnational nature of the knowledge economy.

the New Economic Model (NEM) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) focuses on economic reform.

*1Malaysia*, announced on 16 September 2008, emphasises national unity, acceptance of ethnic diversity, and the principle of “*keadilan untuk semua kaum*” (lit. “fairness for all races”) (PMO, 2008). While acknowledging the challenges of building unity within a multi-ethnic nation, *1Malaysia* calls for “unity in diversity and inclusiveness” based on “a few important values that should become the practice of each and every Malaysian” (quoted in PMO, 2010, my translation). These values are “culture of excellence”, “endurance”, “humility”, “acceptance”, “loyalty”, “meritocracy”, “education”, and “integrity” (Malaysia, 2009a). The *1Malaysia* concept also comes with the slogan of “People First, Performance Now”,<sup>72</sup> where the emphasis on meritocracy and efficiency is to be carried out through the GTP strategies. To emphasise national unity, images of racial harmony symbolised by the Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnicities often appear on *1Malaysia* promotional materials (**Figure 5.12**).

**Figure 5.12: *1Malaysia* Banner in Kuala Lumpur, 2012**



Source: Author

In upholding his promise for an inclusive *1Malaysia*, Najib’s administration has introduced strategies to reform pro-*Bumiputera* policies. One such major reform is the abolishment of foreign capital restrictions in 27 service industry sub-sectors (*The Star*, 2009). This meant that

<sup>72</sup> The slogan “*Rakyat Didahulukan, Pencapaian Diutamakan*” literally translates to “The people shall be considered first, achievements shall be prioritised”.

firms seeking listing in these sub-sectors are no longer required to maintain 30% *Bumiputera* share-ownership, previously stipulated in the NEP. Some observers (e.g. Fukunaga, 2010) have speculated that Najib's *Bumiputera* policy reforms are in response to firstly, growing domestic dissent on pro-*Bumiputera* policies; and secondly, the global financial crisis. Indeed, Najib himself acknowledged that "[t]he world is changing quickly and we must be ready to change with it or risk being left behind" (*Malaysia Today*, 2009).

Following domestic political pressures, Najib announced in July 2012 that the Sedition Act will be abolished and replaced with the National Harmony Act. In July 2013, Najib announced that the act will "address any action that can incite hatred and raise disloyalty towards the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* or any ruler", "address actions to spread malicious intent and create racial tension among the different segments of the population in the country", and "deal with any attempts to question matters involving the rights, status, special privileges, sovereignty or fixed prerogative as stipulated and protected under the Federal Constitution or Articles 151, 153 and 181 of the Federal Constitution" (*New Straits Times*, 2013). This suggests that despite promises of social change, nothing in fact has changed.

### **5.3 Focusing on Political Power**

In **Section 4.3.3**, I discussed how the Alliance found a winning formula through a coalition of race-based political parties. This coalition strategy, as well as manipulation of the electoral process, continued to deliver electoral success to the ruling coalition over the past 13 general elections. Reminders of the importance of a "non-confrontational culture" have also been used as discourse to secure political power. In sum, these efforts indirectly resulted in a general apolitical stance amongst the Malaysian population.

#### **5.3.1 Barisan Nasional: Congealing the Alliance Formula**

In 1974, Razak formed a "Government of National Unity", which expanded the Alliance to include other non-Malay and opposition parties. The resulting coalition, *Barisan Nasional* (BN) (lit. "National Front"), consisted of nine political parties (including parties representing the states of Sabah and Sarawak, and the Islamic party PAS). BN's coalition strategy has been effective in winning electoral votes. However, UMNO remains the head of the coalition despite the BN being an alliance of "national unity" that was supposed to also represent other non-UMNO (i.e. non-Malay) political interests.

As Ismail Kassim (1979, p. 3) explains:

*The linchpin of this political arrangement is UMNO whose dominance is accepted unquestionably by the other ... component parties. In practice, this means that the UMNO president automatically becomes the head of the Barisan. As leader of UMNO and of the multiparty coalition, his role is that of a balancer of community interests or, in short, the final arbiter on the shape and direction of national policies. To lead the coalition, he has to satisfy Malay aspirations without alienating the non-Malay component parties. In this perpetually balancing job, there are no hard and fast rules. He is only guided by what he deems to be fair to all communities. But, at the crunch, there is no doubt as to which side he will lean if he is to retain his position as undisputed leader of UMNO and hence of the multiracial Barisan.*

The BN's alliance formula influenced the Malaysian political system in two ways. First, political parties are largely race-based; and second, the cooperation is "mainly based on UMNO's definition of state" (Mohd Rizal Mohd Yaakop, 2010, p. 55). This also means that Malay interests continue to shape Malaysia's national policies due to UMNO's political dominance.

### **5.3.2 Manipulating the Electoral Process**

To ensure continued political dominance, various electoral strategies were put in place. Electoral boundaries have been redrawn to give electoral strength to constituencies (with particular distributions of ethnic groups) favouring BN (Balasubramaniam, 2006). There has also been unequal apportionment of votes to Parliamentary seats, enabling the ruling coalition to secure more seats than the actual percentage of votes. For example, in the 1999 elections, BN secured three-quarters share of *Dewan Rakyat* seats with only 56.5% share of the total votes (**Table 5.10**). There were also incidences of electoral fraud, including mass deletion of names from the electoral roll – mostly Chinese – between the 1969 and 1974 elections (Crouch, 1996, p. 58), mass registration of non-resident voters (including illegal immigrants) as well as dead persons included in the electoral roll (Ong, 2005).

Malaysia is one of 115 independent countries and territories adopting absentee voting, a legacy inherited from the British colonial administration (Ellis, 2007). However, extraterritorial voting rights are not universally available to all overseas Malaysians. Prior to 2013, only civil servants, military personnel, full-time students and their spouses living abroad were allowed to register and vote as absent voters. Overseas Malaysians who are privately-employed, unemployed or retired are required to return to Malaysia to vote in person. However, some overseas students, especially those who are not on Malaysian government scholarships, have experienced difficulties in their attempts to register with Malaysian embassies and consulates.

**Table 5.10: Government and Opposition Seats and Votes in *Dewan Rakyat* (%), 1959-2013**

Election year	Government*		Opposition	
	Seats (%)	Votes (%)	Seats (%)	Votes (%)
1959** <sup>a</sup>	71.15	51.7	28.85	48.3
1964** <sup>a</sup>	85.58	58.5	14.42	41.5
1969 <sup>a</sup>	66.00	49.3	34.00	50.7
1974 <sup>a</sup>	87.66	60.7	12.34	39.3
1978 <sup>a</sup>	84.42	57.2	15.58	42.8
1982 <sup>a</sup>	85.71	60.5	14.29	39.5
1986 <sup>a</sup>	83.62	55.8	16.38	41.5
1990 <sup>a</sup>	70.55	53.4	29.45	46.6
1995 <sup>a</sup>	84.38	65.2	15.62	34.8
1999 <sup>a</sup>	76.68	56.5	23.32	43.5
2004 <sup>b</sup>	89.63	63.84	10.36	36.16
2008 <sup>b</sup>	63.06	51.39	36.93	48.61
2013 <sup>c</sup>	59.90	48.22	40.09	51.77

\* Government means the Alliance for 1959 and 1964; the Alliance and coalition partner the Sarawak United People's Party for 1969; and the Barisan Nasional from 1974.

\*\* 1959 figures are for Malaya. 1964 figures are for Peninsula Malaysia as parliamentary elections were not held in Sabah and Sarawak.

Sources: <sup>a</sup>Funston (2000, p. 49); <sup>b</sup>Chin and Wong (2009); <sup>c</sup>PoliTweet (2013)

It has been alleged that the lack of transparency in overseas postal voting processes is part of the ruling coalition's strategy to secure seats in certain constituencies. However, this has been largely anecdotal to date (*ABC News*, 2008). It is also believed that limiting overseas voting to the select group of overseas Malaysians is an electoral strategy. With *Bumiputera* quota restrictions in overseas scholarships and civil service jobs (including the military), this means that this group of eligible overseas voters would be, by default, Malay. Thus, excluding non-Malay overseas voters would give electoral advantage to UMNO, and hence BN.

On 16 September 2012, Najib sent a letter, written in Mandarin, to all registered Chinese voters (**Figure 5.13**). The letter reminded that Malaysia has been able to develop from an agriculture-based country to a "peaceful and modernised" country because of her "non-confrontational culture". According to Najib (2012, my translation):

*... this "non-confrontational culture" means not continually exposing and publicly debating sensitive and explosive issues. Everyone has rights to put forth demands, but we cannot expect 100 percent satisfaction from our wishes – and Malaysia's multi-ethnic communities understand this simple and pragmatic logic. As such, our nation enjoyed social stability in the past decades.*





The letter reminds Malaysians of the importance of maintaining national unity and to steer clear of "sensitive and explosive issues". However, it is important to contextualise the timing of

this letter: it was sent in anticipation of the 13th General Election which was subsequently held eight months later. Thus, the state-led discourse of national unity could be seen as a guise to gain electoral support.

Figure 5.13: Letter to Chinese Voters

# SELAMAT MENYAMBUT HARI MALAYSIA

16 SEPTEMBER 2012

**MAKLUMAT PENGUNDI**

Nama : \_\_\_\_\_

Daerah Mungudi : \_\_\_\_\_

Utan : \_\_\_\_\_

Partisan : \_\_\_\_\_

在马来西亚这个新的国家在1957年8月31日诞生的时候，外国评论者抱着悲观的态度，不看好我国领袖能够顺利地建设这多元的国家。但6年多后的1963年9月16日，马来西亚与新加坡、沙巴以及砂拉越，还共同组成马来西亚，使到这个崭新的国家更多元化。新加坡和平脱离马来西亚后，沙巴和砂拉越则继续成为马来西亚不可分割的一部分。和谐相处，这的确是个不小的成就，这一走，便走到了今日的第49个年头。


马来西亚能够从一个农业为基础的国家，和平稳健的过渡到一个现代化的国家，现在正朝向先进国的目标前进，这一路走来是不简单的。与我国差不多同一个时期获得独立的前殖民地，绝大数都没有像马来西亚般的成就。原因当然很多，但当中不可忽略的重要一点，就是我们向来所倡导的“非对抗式”（non confrontational）文化，促使我国能够在过去数十年稳健发展。

简言之，这“非对抗式文化”，实际上就是不把那些具爆发性和敏感的话题，公开、激烈且无休止的争论，人人都有权利提出要求，可是大家不能够期望得到百分之百的满足，马来西亚各民族都明白这个简单且务实的道理。因为如此，国人实际上在过去数十年来，都享受了极大的社会稳定。我国从政党政治的议会民主到社会经济多元化发展，这都是许多发展中国家人羡慕的。


无论如何，在308全国大选后，我们发现“非对抗式文化”，好像突然间从空气中消失，取而代之的，是“对抗到底”的文化。即使我们承认诸如走上街头、公开讨论敏感课题与人民的民主权利，但是我们是否可以进一步想：要解决问题或者要改善人民的权益，公开对抗是否就是最好最有效，并且可以不断应用的方法吗？

在庆祝马来西亚日的时刻，大家不要忘记“非对抗式文化”虽然有其不足之处，但是在维系马来西亚各族共存共荣中，却起了极大的作用。

让我们在庆祝马来西亚日的同时，一起来好好思考这个问题，也祝愿我国人民安居乐业，国运昌盛。



**Y.A.B. DATO' SRI HAJI MOHD. NAJIB BINTI TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK**  
*Pertana Menteri Malaysia merangkap  
Pengerusi Barisan Nasional Negeri Selangor*



**Sayang Selangor, Yaktini BN** | Hotline : 1300 - 22 - 2626 | [pakar@bnselangor.org](mailto:pakar@bnselangor.org)

Source: Personal communication

### 5.3.3 Political Attitudes

In a survey of political attitudes amongst Malaysians conducted in November 1994, Welsh (1996) found that Malaysians generally adopt a semi-democratic stance. However, ethnicity is the most significant differentiating factor in attitudes towards political rights and political participation. With reference to voting rights and elections, her respondents felt that firstly, not all Malaysian residents and citizens should have equal voting rights; and secondly, elections are not considered to be important. In particular, her respondents were willing to restrict political participation for groups “perceived to threaten social order, lacking qualifications to participate, or holding ‘deviant views’” (p. 889). Generally, the Malays opposed the expansion of democracy, the minorities (especially the Indians) favoured democracy, while the Chinese were more ambivalent.

Welsh’s findings are important to contextualise my concept of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus. Firstly, citizenship as political rights is not a priority for Malaysian citizens. This can be explained by the institutionalisation of Western liberal citizenship as an alien concept to a collection of societies that had no prior understanding and need for that state-citizen relationship. Secondly, Malaysians accept that there are unequal and differentiated citizenship rights. This can be understood through the ethno-politics of Malaysia’s nation-building. Thirdly, Malaysians do not consider electoral participation to be the most critical aspect of Malaysian democracy. This can be understood in the context of problems with the electoral process, as well as the association of defiant behaviour with any contestation of the existing political regime.

Thus, Malaysia’s citizenship habitus is one where firstly, *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship rights are accepted as is – perhaps not because of agreement with the policy, but more due to the lack of room for manoeuvre. Secondly, citizenship is understood as nationality (specifically loyalty and emotional affiliation to the nation), but not as political rights and electoral participation.

## 5.4 Summary

As early as the 1970s, Carlson (1975, p. 21) predicted that

*[t]he ethnic tension may be the force that keeps, and will keep, the present [Malaysian] government in power. It is both its weakness and its strength.*

In this chapter, I have shown how the post-colonial Malaysian state perpetuates, develops and exacerbates colonial legacies – particularly of “race” – inherited from the British. While the British materialised “race” as a real category and social stratification factor, the post-colonial Malaysian state carried this further by introducing legislations, policies and techniques of governing as a result of the fear of “racial tensions” to “national security”. Ironically, in the attempts to subdue and curb “racial tensions”, the post-colonial Malaysian state has managed instead to entrench racial divisions into the social, economic and political wiring of the Malaysian society. This would ultimately inform and configure Malaysia’s citizenship habitus.

The post-colonial Malaysian state’s focus on “racial tensions” is an inheritance from the British colonial government. The latter made real the concept of “race”, which turned into Malay-Chinese tensions during the Emergency. Furthermore, the race-based political representation and the “political compromise” of the Alliance formula meant that “racial tensions” would always be present, but cannot be effectively resolved. The May 1969 incident was one political consequence, yet the post-colonial Malaysian state has repeatedly used the event as a discursive reminder of “racial riots” threatening “national security”.

This focus on “racial tensions” led to two complementary strategies. On the one hand, constitutional amendments and affirmative action policies were introduced to strengthen the special position and privileges of the *Bumiputeras*. Interventions in *Bumiputera* education opportunities and civil service jobs further resulted in the “Malay”-isation of policymaking in post-colonial Malaysia. This, I argue, is an extension of British colonial policy which prioritised Malay interests and cultivated a Malay political elite and bureaucratic class for the ease of governing a multi-ethnic population. On the other hand, authoritative legislation such as the ISA and the Sedition Act were used to curb anti-government struggles in the name of “national security”. This, I argue, is a technique of governing inherited from the British colonial government, especially during the Emergency.

At the same time, national unity is seen as an antidote to racial issues. In this regard, the post-colonial Malaysian state utilised three strategies. First, by governing the citizenry through hard and soft approaches: legislation and the criminalisation of “dissenters”, discourses of disloyalty and reminders of citizenry “good-conduct”. Second, by instilling a sense of common nationality through education: the *Rukunegara*, the national education system and curriculum, and *Lagu Setia*. Third, by motivating the citizenry through economic nationalism projects articulated through vague concepts of *Bangsa Malaysia* and *1Malaysia*.



While implementing these strategies, the post-colonial Malaysian state also manipulated the electoral process to secure its political power. This translates into three components affecting Malaysians' citizenship practices. First, there is a general apolitical stance amongst the Malaysian population – or at least a distrust of the electoral process and hence a lack of participation. Second, there is a conflation of “Malaysia” the country/nation with “Malaysia” the state/government/ruling party. In other words, UMNO = the Malaysian government. Third, there is a conflation of citizenship with nationality, and the equating of citizenship as loyalty and adherence to national unity.

In practice, this means that Malaysian citizens are expected to prioritise national harmony, and not to raise “sensitive” issues that could rock the boat and result in “another May 13 incident”. At the same time, constraints put in place as affirmative action policies leave non-*Bumiputeras* with little choice but to seek emigration as alternatives to social mobility. However, emigrants are in turn criminalised as disloyal citizens. This results in a self-fulfilling prophecy and vicious cycle consolidating Malay indigeneity and political dominance in post-colonial Malaysia.

**PART III – “RACE”, EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP MATTERS:**

**MOBILE MALAYSIANS**

## **CHAPTER 6. MOBILE MALAYSIANS AND A CULTURE OF MIGRATION**

In **Part II**, I traced the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus in colonial and post-colonial Malaysia. While the British colonial administration introduced certain legacies such as the materialisation of "race" and a divisive approach to the education system, these were subsequently institutionalised and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian government. My purpose is not to put the blame on any party, but to focus on understanding the historicity of Malaysia's citizenship habitus. Furthermore, it is crucial to position these colonial and post-colonial acts of governing vis-à-vis their respective socio-political and temporal contexts. Nevertheless, the accumulated historical effects result in the beliefs, dispositions and practices associated with Malaysia's citizenship habitus that are subsequently carried into mobile Malaysians' migration trajectories.

This chapter makes the transition between the historicity of Malaysia's citizenship habitus (**Part II**), and how this is carried into mobile Malaysians' contemporary migration (**Part III**). This chapter outlines the current state of mobile Malaysians' emigration, focusing on London/UK and Singapore as destinations; **Chapter 7** elaborates on mobile Malaysians' migration geographies at different life stages; while **Chapter 8** examines mobile Malaysians' citizenship interpretations and practices.

Following this introduction, **Section 6.1** defines what I mean by "culture of migration", and how that connects to mobile Malaysians' citizenship habitus. **Section 6.2** describes the present state of Malaysia's emigration in general, and the compositions of Malaysians in Singapore and London/UK specifically. **Section 6.3** describes migration pathways in three stages: firstly, internal migration; secondly, migrating for education; and thirdly, long-term stays following education migration. Taken altogether, this chapter describes mobile Malaysians' culture of migration at the broader macro-scale, in order to contextualise my respondents' narratives at the micro-scale in **Chapters 7** and **8**.

### 6.1 *Carrying Legacies into a Culture of Migration*

In this thesis, I argue that mobile Malaysians' migration can be understood as an outcome of colonial legacies. The colonial legacies – of racial stereotypes, Malay “indigeneity” and the prioritisation of their interests in education, civil service and political power – are carried forward into post-colonial Malaysia. These take the form of affirmative action policies prioritising *Bumiputera* education and postgraduate employment through university enrolment quotas, dedicated secondary and pre-university facilities for *Bumiputeras*, government scholarships and access to the civil service. This has led to non-*Bumiputera* students – especially the middle-class – to pursue education overseas, thus becoming mobile Malaysians.

While these migrations occurred when mobile Malaysians were students, their education migrations eventually turn into labour migrations and long-term residences. On the one hand, students on government overseas scholarships – predominantly *Bumiputeras* – would have secured civil service jobs in Malaysia awaiting their post-graduation return. On the other hand, students on private funding – predominantly non-*Bumiputeras* – were left with little option but to continue their stay overseas. This is due to three reasons: first, limited employment and social mobility opportunities in Malaysia due to affirmative action policies affecting the labour market; secondly, opportunities and preference for merit-based career development and progression in other countries where they obtained their higher education; and thirdly, the desire to capitalise on stronger foreign currencies to finance their education debt, typically paid for by their families. Over time, this turns into a culture of migration, where migrating for education turns into long-term settlement.

I use “culture of migration” to mean firstly, that *migration/mobility is a common, accepted way of life* for individuals and their families; and secondly, that *migrating for education has become an internalised social mobility strategy* that may not be consciously recognised as a way to negotiate structural constraints posed by the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies. My use of “culture of migration” is different from – yet in some ways similar to – how this has been interpreted in existing literature. Before I explain how my approach is different or similar, I shall first outline three existing approaches to “culture of migration”.

First, for Hardy (2005), culture of migration refers to the “common ground” shared by migrants – their courage, responses to situations at home, insertions into old and new migration

networks, and intentions to return at the onset of migration. In other words, Hardy sees culture of migration as common patterns of attributes, values and characteristics shared by those who have had migration experiences.

Second, for Ali (2007, p. 39), culture of migration refers to ideas, beliefs, desires, symbols, myths, education, practices and cultural artefacts (e.g. media and material goods) that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. Furthermore, cultures of migration “reflect the state of economic dependence in developing countries and the resulting flow of migrants to the developed countries, and they also result from the existence and strengthening of these migrant networks” (p. 54). This perspective is similar to Kandel and Massey’s (2002) analysis of Mexican migration to the USA. Firstly, there is a socio-cultural construction of migration as an aspired rite of passage. Secondly and consequently, there are established networks and paths of migration connecting origin and host contexts, hence smoothening and perpetuating a particular migration flow.

Third, for Cohen and Sirkeci (2011), culture of migration refers to how individual and household migration decisions are framed within certain social practices and cultural beliefs. In particular, they take an explicitly meso-level approach in attempting to link macro-structural forces and micro-individual agency with respect to migration decisions and trajectories. They see culture of migration – i.e. “the social practice, meaning, and symbolic logic of mobility” (p. ix) – as a Bourdieuan habitus approach in understanding the migration phenomena beyond economic explanations.

My approach is most similar to Cohen and Sirkeci’s in terms of adopting a structuration perspective towards understanding migration. I use “culture of migration” to explain how, in the case of mobile Malaysians, migrating for education takes on certain *socialised meanings*. In this way, migrating for education becomes an *internalised cultural practice* that is not necessarily recognised as responses to structural constraints. To a lesser degree, my use of “culture of migration” overlaps with Ali’s (2007) description of an established migration flow linking specific origin and destination points. For example, the Malaysia-Singapore and Malaysia-UK migration flows arise from structural factors, but become *perpetuated through socio-cultural beliefs and practices*.

Finally, my use of “culture of migration” does not refer to common migrant attributes, as in Hardy’s (2005) uses of it. However, my use of “culture of migration” incorporates *common cultural practices of migration* shared by migrants with similar circumstances (e.g. educational

paths to be discussed in **Chapter 7**). Thus, I use “culture of migration” to describe and explain how a pattern of migration (especially for education) arises in the Malaysian context, and subsequently how this transforms into a more permanent migration. “Culture”, as I use it, is a set of internalised beliefs, practices, norms and behaviours that offer meanings to individuals in regard to their migration motivations, decisions and trajectories.

This connects to my conceptualisation of citizenship habitus: firstly, the *meanings* of citizenship as it is understood and interpreted by citizens through a process of socialisation; and secondly, the *practices* of citizenship as the citizen learns what kinds of citizenry actions are deemed appropriate and/or possible. The two components are not static, nor are they discrete entities. In fact, interactions and crossings between aspects of the two components produce a dynamic and constantly-evolving citizenship habitus. For the purpose of this thesis, however, I confine my discussion to Malaysia’s citizenship habitus as it stands for my respondents.

Mobile Malaysians’ citizenship habitus is informed by three interrelated understandings. First, citizenship is understood as a status of exclusive privilege that did not come by easily or automatically. Second, citizenship is understood to be *Bumiputera*-differentiated, and is accepted as such. Third, citizenship is understood first and foremost as nationality – as a common national identity and commitment to national unity/harmony – at the expense of citizenship as civil, legal and political rights.

As a result of migration, mobile Malaysians’ transnational relationship with “Malaysia” *at a distance* has implications for their citizenship habitus in two ways. First, their understandings and interpretations of “Malaysia” have been locked in time, generally inscribed by their pre-migration living experiences in Malaysia *and* their life stages at the point of emigration. Secondly, their attitudes towards and affiliations to “Malaysia” the “government/nation” have been reinforced by perceptions nurtured through their transnational social networks. Given the *Bumiputera*-differentiated nature of this culture of migration – which I argue is an outcome of British colonial legacies exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state – it is understandable that there is a general negative stance towards the Malaysian government.

Thus, the culture of migration has created the mobile Malaysian. On the one hand, mobile Malaysians are tertiary-educated, professional skilled migrants valuable to any country with labour demands – Malaysia included. On the other hand, mobile Malaysians are also members of the Malaysian *diaspora*, in the sense of being “forced” to leave their home country while

simultaneously yearning for “home”. Paradoxically, as I will show in **Chapter 8**, there is a clear separation between feelings of distrust and disappointment towards “*Malaysia*” the government, and feelings of belonging and yearning for “*Malaysia*” the imagined community and/or past memories. I argue that this duality of connection and disconnection to “*Malaysia*” can be understood through the historicity of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus.

## 6.2 The Present State of Emigration

In April 2011, the World Bank (2011) published a report on Malaysia’s brain drain, estimating that there were 1 million overseas Malaysians in 2010 compared to 750,000 in 2000, with a third of them being tertiary-educated. It also found that in 2010, one in ten tertiary-educated Malaysians migrated to an OECD country – twice the world average. Indeed, *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship rights and the NEP has resulted in significant emigration of Chinese- (Brooks & Waters, 2011, p. 40) and Indian-Malaysians (*Taipei Times*, 2011), especially to Singapore and the OECD countries. Malaysian migrants in Singapore, for example, have doubled over the 1990-2000 decade (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Migrant Stocks (Malaysia as Country of Birth) in Selected Countries**

Resident in	Year (number)				Growth over decade (%)	
	1990	2000	2010	2013	1990-2000	2000-2010
Australia	75,352	84,728	134,572	145,227	12.4	58.8
Canada	16,058	21,472	25,093	26,127	33.7	16.9
New Zealand	8,750	11,243	16,944	18,741	28.5	50.7
UK	42,262	47,868	60,560	65,319	13.3	26.5
USA	38,939	53,299	62,359	64,619	36.9	17.0
Singapore	195,428	605,990	971,827	1,044,994	210.1	60.4

Source: UN (2013)

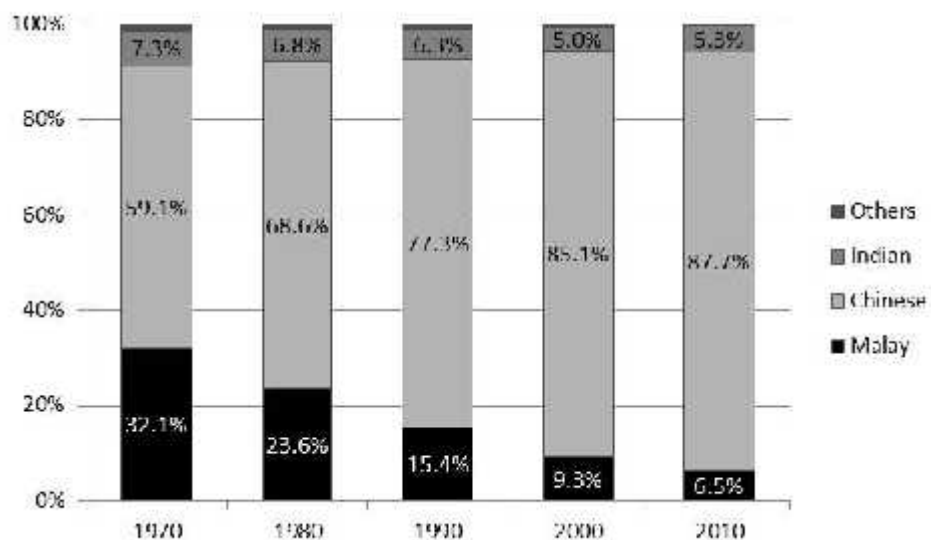
From 1983 to 1990, at least 40,000 Malaysians emigrated to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States (Pillai, 1992; Pillai & Yusof, 1998). By 2000, the five largest destination countries hosting 83% of the total number of overseas Malaysians were Singapore (46%) (counting only the Malaysians registered as Singapore residents), Australia (12%), Brunei (9%), US (8%) and UK (8%) (The World Bank, 2011). Between 2007 and 2008/09, emigration from Malaysia more than doubled – 304,358 Malaysians emigrated between March 2008 to August 2009, compared to 139,696 in 2007 (*The Star*, 2010).

In 2007, it was reported that there have been 106,003 citizenship renunciations since Malaysia's independence (*The Star*, 2007b). The same report noted that between 1996 and April 2007, 28,527 Malaysians renounced their citizenship, of which 26,804 (93.9%) were non-Malays. Between 2000 and 2006, 16,474 Malaysians renounced their citizenships, of which 87% were Chinese (*Malaysiakini*, 2007). Less than 1% of the Malaysian emigrant population returned to Malaysia between 2000 to 2009 (*The Sun Daily*, 2010).

### 6.2.1 Malaysians in Singapore

Singapore is one of the world's top immigrant-receiving countries: in 2010, 40.7% of its population were immigrants (The World Bank, 2010). Singapore also hosts the largest Malaysian emigrant population, of which the Chinese-Malaysians remain a majority (**Figure 6.1**). Indeed, Cartier (2003, p. 73) notes that the Chinese-Malaysian emigrant has typically been “a skilled, highly educated migrant” seeking better life opportunities. In this regard, family migration has been practised to convert “family economic capital” into other “deployable capital” (Nonini, 1997, p. 209) such as overseas education for the next generation. This is further facilitated by “Singapore's close geographical proximity, historical and economic ties, and relatively high wages” (Pillai, 1992, p. 25). **Table 6.2** shows the growing numbers and proportions of first time arrivals in Singapore for persons born in Malaysia.

**Figure 6.1: Malaysians (Country of Birth) Resident in Singapore (By Ethnicity)**



Source: DOSS (1973; 1981; 1992; 2001; 2010b)

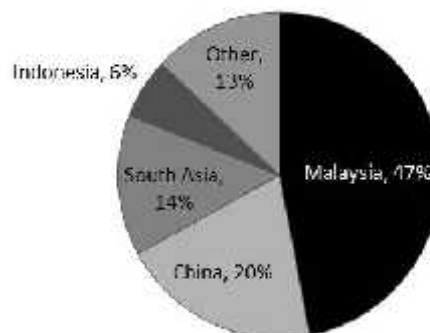


**Table 6.2: Persons Born in Malaysia by Year of First Arrival in Singapore**

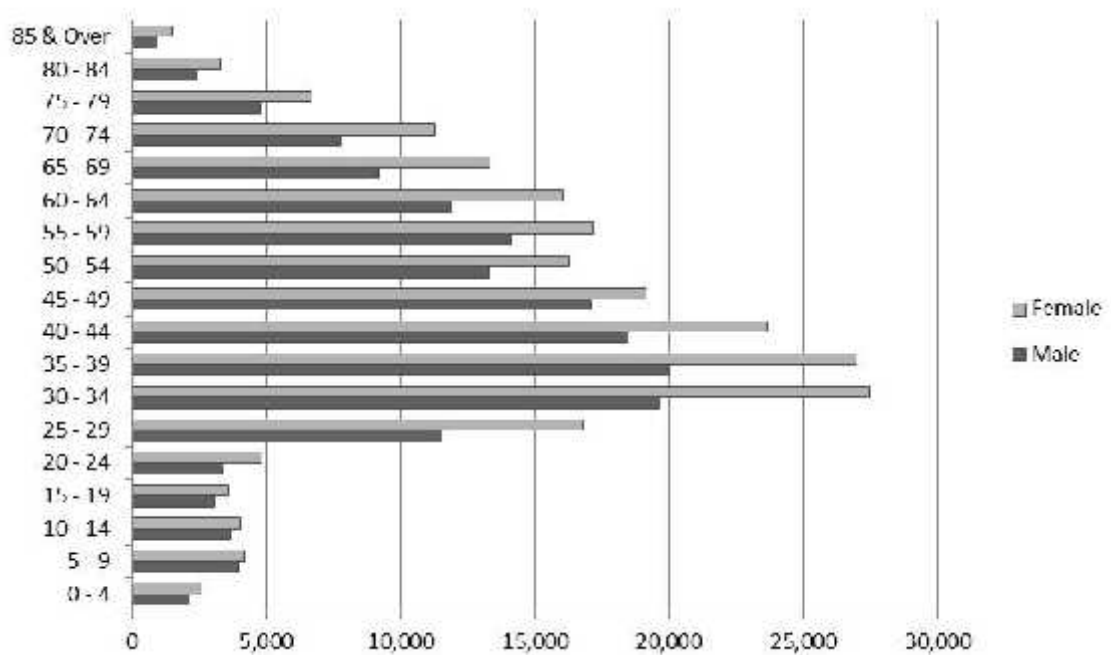
Year of first arrival	Numbers			%		As % of total arrivals
	Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah-Sarawak	Total Malaysia	Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah-Sarawak	
Before 1931	3,475	280	3,755	92.5%	7.5%	6.4%
1931 to 1940	8,506	485	8,991	94.6%	5.4%	10.8%
1941 to 1945	9,929	214	10,143	97.9%	2.1%	37.7%
1946 to 1950	24,141	530	24,671	97.9%	2.1%	41.7%
1951 to 1955	27,707	252	27,959	99.1%	0.9%	52.8%
1956 to 1960	30,432	234	30,666	99.2%	0.8%	58.4%
1961 to 1965	22,928	217	23,145	99.1%	0.9%	77.1%
1966 to 1970	23,025	449	23,474	98.1%	1.9%	60.4%
1971 to 1975	29,887	541	30,428	98.2%	1.8%	69.6%
1976 to 1980	48,319	1,611	49,930	96.8%	3.2%	56.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>228,349</b>	<b>4,813</b>	<b>233,162</b>			

Source: DOSS (1981)

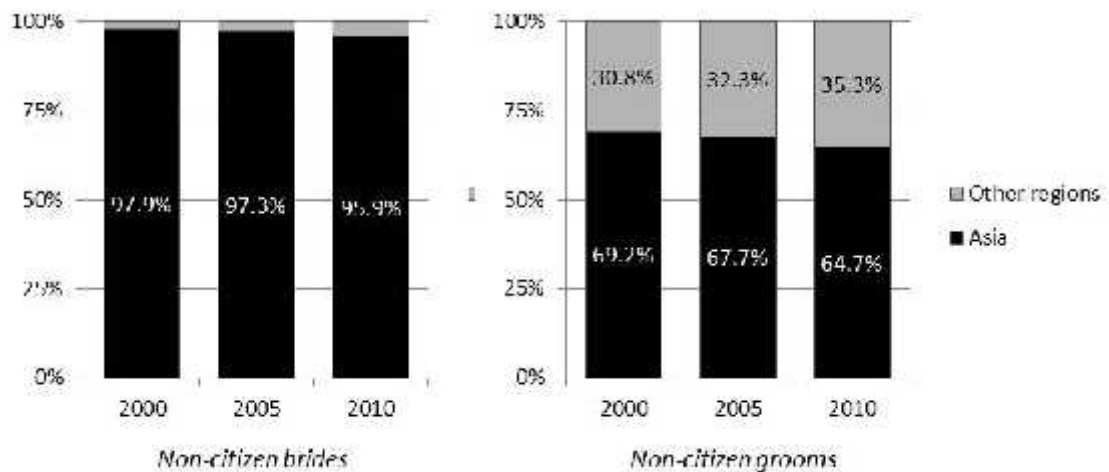
In addition, Singapore's active recruitment of students, skilled and semi-skilled labour from Malaysia presents a strong pull factor for Malaysian emigrants. This has also resulted in the sustaining of transnational families across the Malaysia-Singapore border (e.g. husband works in Singapore while other family members reside in Malaysia) (Lam, et al., 2002). In 2010, Malaysians constitute 47% of Singapore's tertiary-educated foreign population (**Figure 6.2**). In 2010, the majority of Malaysian-born people resident in Singapore are in the economically-active age group of 30-39 years old (**Figure 6.3**). Women outnumber men across all age groups, particularly in the 25-44 and 60-74 age groups. This could be attributable to Malaysian women getting married to Singaporean men and settling down in Singapore. Based on statistics on international marriages with Singaporean citizens during 2000-2010, there has been a larger proportion of Asian non-Singaporean brides compared to Asian non-Singaporean grooms (**Figure 6.4**).

**Figure 6.2: Share of Tertiary-Educated by Country of Birth in Total Foreign-Born Resident Non-Student Population in Singapore Aged 15+, 2010**

Source: The World Bank (2011)

**Figure 6.3: Malaysian-Born Residents in Singapore, by Age Group and Gender, 2010**

Source: DOSS (2011)

**Figure 6.4: Non-Citizen Spouses Married to Singapore Citizens (%), 2000-2010**

Source: NPTD et al. (2011)

It is commonly believed that many Malaysians in Singapore have taken up Singapore permanent residence (PR) and/or Singapore citizenship. Lam and Yeoh's (2004) study of professional Chinese-Malaysians in Singapore, for example, demonstrates that most proceeded to obtain PR after initially holding employment passes. Some would take up Singapore citizenship, either of their own accord or having been encouraged to consider it, especially for those working in the public sector. One of my respondents related how his public

sector manager would individually interview Malaysians in the department on an annual basis, asking if they would consider taking-up Singapore citizenship. There is also a common perception that Malaysians in Singapore's public service would hit glass ceilings unless they became Singapore citizens.

Although Singapore publishes statistics on total numbers of Singapore PRs and new citizens, exact numbers of Malaysians who have done so are not made available. Requests for such statistics have been refused on the grounds of them being "confidential and sensitive" (*Malaysian Business*, 2002). My request to the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) in December 2012 was refused as the information "is not available for release" (personal communication, 2012, 18 Dec).

However, it is possible to obtain an estimation of the number from census and other statistics. From 2000 to 2010, about half of Singapore's resident population were born in Malaysia (The World Bank, 2011, p. 100). In 2010, Singapore's resident population was 3.77 million. By projection, this means that in 2010 there were an estimated 1.88 million Malaysian-born persons who had acquired SCs and SPRs. In 2010, 35% of Malaysian-born non-student residents in Singapore were tertiary-educated, compared to 23% in 2000 (p. 96). This indicates an increased share in Singapore's "foreign talent" population.

The late-1990s saw Singapore welcoming "foreign talents" as contributors to its vision as a "talent capital", articulated through its Singapore 21 and Remaking Singapore campaigns. One of the Singapore 21 subject committee reports explicitly explained the need "to attract the foreign talent to cast his [*sic*] lot with Singapore and opt to become a PR and perhaps later for his children to be citizens" (Singapore 21 Subject Committee, 2000, p. 13). The report also argued that talent is "crucial to Singapore's survival and success"<sup>73</sup> (p. 1), and that "attracting talent involves promoting Singapore to foreigners and removing obstacles to the entry of talent" (p. 16).

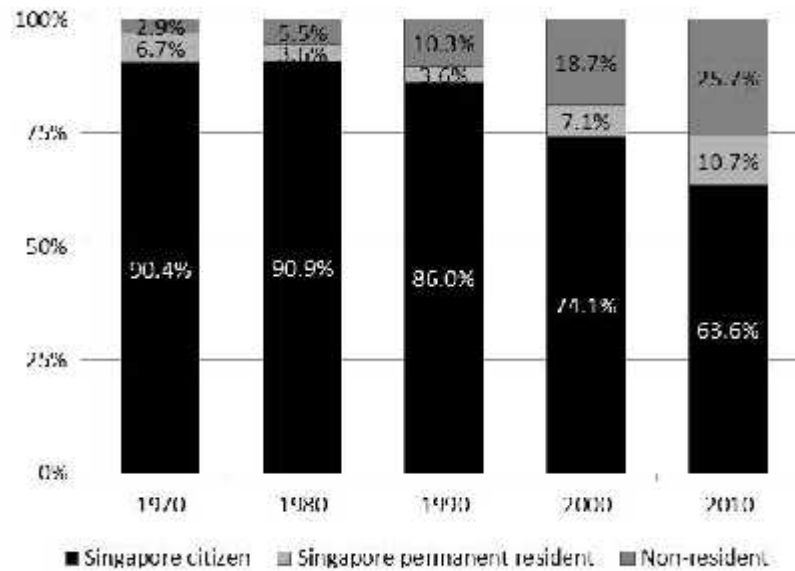
As a result of Singapore's liberal immigration stance for some groups, the proportion of foreigners ("non-residents") and SPRs have increased (**Figure 6.5**). Since 1987, there has been an increase in the number of PRs granted to foreigners, with the sharpest jump occurring from 1989-1990 (**Figure 6.6**). While in the 2000s one in four people (i.e. 25%) in Singapore was a foreigner (Koh, 2003, p. 232), this has increased to 38% in 2012 (**Figure 6.7**). In a Parliament

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<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, the preoccupation with "talent for survival" has already been articulated by Singapore's first Prime Minister as early as the late 1970s (Lee, 1982; Quah, 1984).

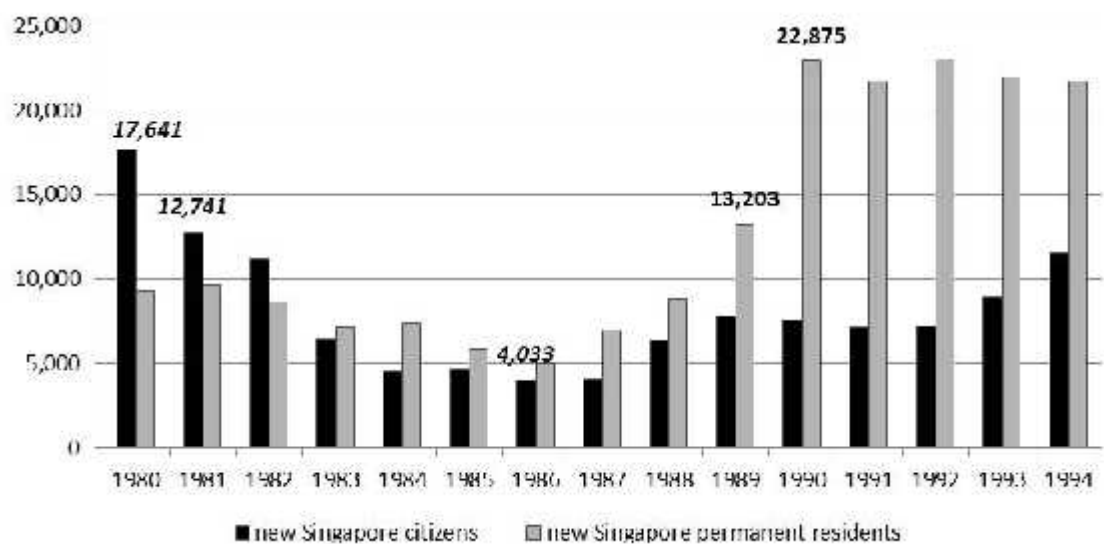
written answer, it was reported that from 2001 to 2010, Singapore granted an annual average of 13,110 citizenships and 48,203 PRs, and that persons from Southeast Asian countries contributed to 49.4% of new citizens and 49.2% of new PRs (Teo, 2011).

**Figure 6.5: Singapore Population by Proportions, 1970-2010**



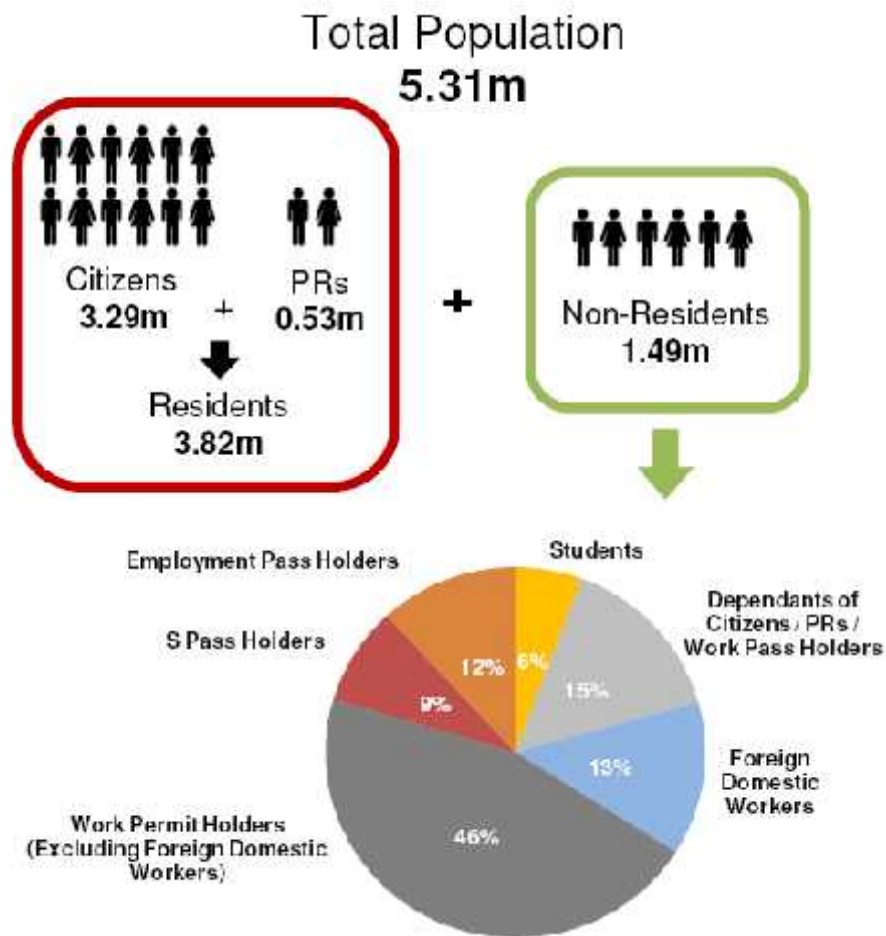
Source: Compiled from Yeoh and Lin (2012)

**Figure 6.6: Singapore's PR and Citizenship Trends, 1980-1994**



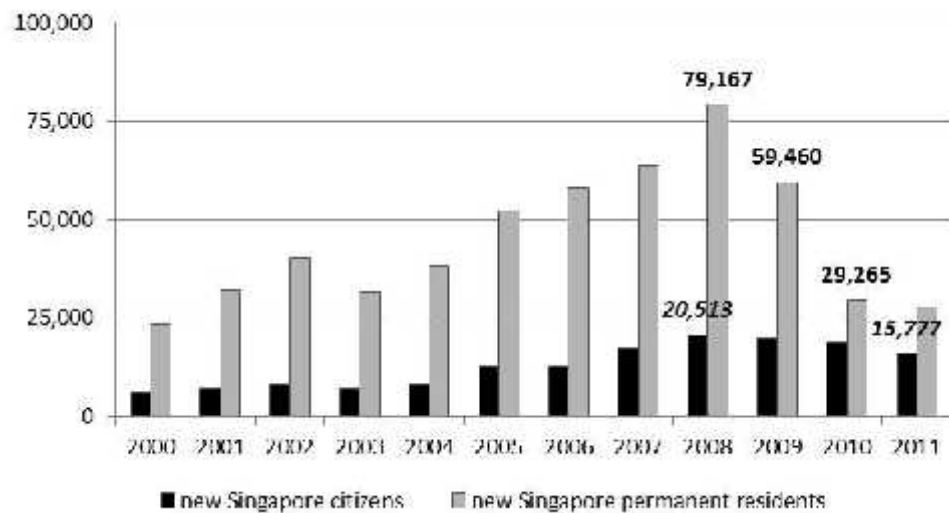
Source: Wong (1997)

Figure 6.7: Singapore Population, June 2012



Source: NPTD (2013, p. 47)

To address concerns on the increasing numbers of immigrants, PRs and naturalised citizens, the Singapore government has shifted its stand from open skilled immigration and naturalisation towards “ensuring quality and assimilability” (Wong, 2010, p. 3). This will be implemented by moderating “the inflow of ... foreign workforce over time”, tightening the PR/citizen assessment framework, and establishing “a greater distinction in privileges and benefits between Singaporeans and PRs in the areas of education and healthcare” (p. 5). As a result, the number of PRs granted has significantly dropped by 25%, while the number of citizenships granted has dropped by 3% between 2008 and 2009 (**Figure 6.8**). The number of PRs granted further dropped by 51% between 2009 and 2010. This exemplifies Singapore’s current stance towards PRs and new citizens: “We allow only those of good quality and who share our core values to become PRs or citizens.” (Wong, 2011, p. 10). These changes will be bound to impact upon Malaysians resident in Singapore, especially those who are contemplating their citizenship and migration decisions.

**Figure 6.8: Singapore's PR and Citizenship Trends, 2000-2009**

Source: NPTD (2012); Wong (2010)

### 6.2.2 Malaysians in London/UK

The UK has been a popular migration destination for Malaysians, especially due to the Commonwealth connection. During the British colonial period, junior Malayan civil servants were selected for higher education in the UK as part of their professional training (Malaya, 1949a, p. 96). Some Malaysians who are Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC), and who qualify under birth, naturalisation or residential requirements, enjoy the right of abode (ROA) in the UK. This means that they can firstly, enter and leave the UK free of immigration control; and secondly, live and work in the UK without restrictions. Their children who were born before 1 January 1983 also enjoy ROA in the UK. Furthermore, as Commonwealth citizens, Malaysians resident in the UK enjoy the same civic rights as British citizens. This includes voting in elections, standing for election in the British House of Commons, and holding public office in the UK.

By 2007, the UK was hosting about 61,000 Malaysians (The World Bank, 2011, p. 90). In 2008, Malaysians residing in London made up 48% of Malaysians in the UK (**Table 6.3**). However, Malaysians in London constituted about 20-30% of overall economically-active Malaysians entering the UK, estimated from the number of National Insurance registrations issued (**Figure 6.9**). From the financial year 2008/09 to 2009/10, there has been a 50% drop in immigrating Malaysians in London registering for National Insurance numbers. This could be a result of the 2008 financial crisis and the introduction of the Points Based System (PBS). In comparison, the number of economically-active Singaporeans immigrating to London has reduced by about

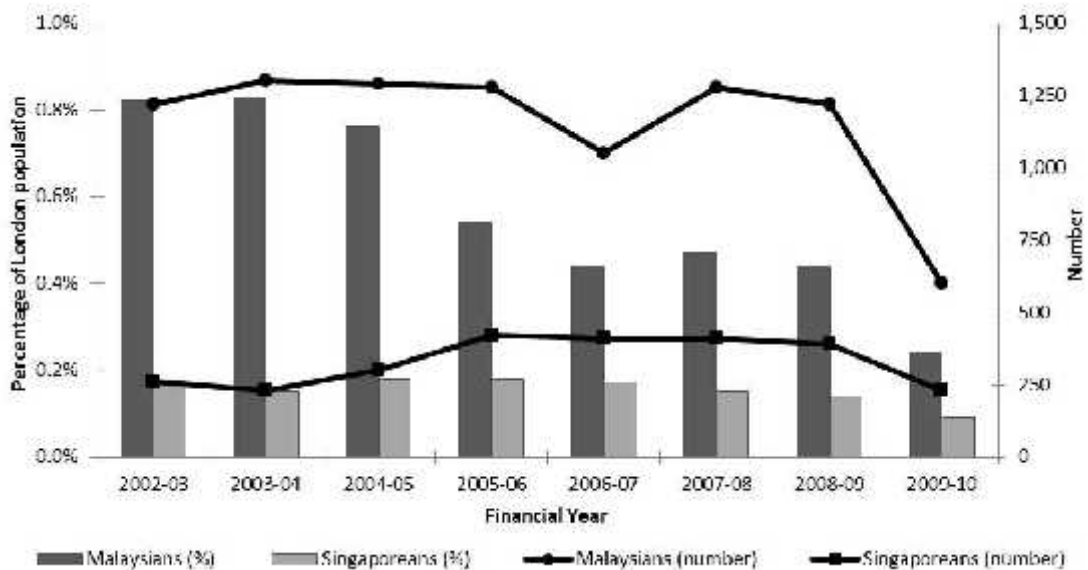
one-third in the same period. Singaporeans are included in this illustration for two purposes. Firstly, this offers a comparison in terms of immigration scale and trend, given the relative similarities of Malaysia and Singapore as sending countries to the UK. Secondly, some Singaporeans could be ex-Malaysians who have taken up Singapore citizenship.

**Table 6.3: Malaysians in London, 2004 and 2008**

	By country of birth <sup>a</sup>		By nationality <sup>b</sup>	
	2004	2008	2004	2008
Malaysia (% of Malaysians in UK)	20,000 (38%)	23,000 (37%)	14,000 (44%)	17,000 (48%)
Total non-UK	2,167,000	2,526,000	1,295,000	1,583,000
Total including UK	7,315,000	7,570,000	7,315,000	7,570,000

Sources: <sup>a</sup>GLA (2013a); <sup>b</sup>GLA (2013b)

**Figure 6.9: National Insurance Numbers Issued to Malaysians and Singaporeans, 2002-2010**



Sources: DWP (2010a, 2010b)

Prior to 2008, Malaysian migrants entered the UK through a few popular migration routes. This includes secondary to higher education followed by work and settlement; working holiday followed by work and settlement; and Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) statuses earned by birth or descent.<sup>74</sup> In February 2008, the UK government, through the UK Border Agency (UKBA), introduced the Points Based System (PBS) for immigration. The PBS allows temporary migrants to enter the UK through one of five tiers, consolidating over 80 previous routes of

<sup>74</sup> Other routes include illegal and undocumented immigration.

entry (**Table 6.4**). Applicants must pass a points assessment (based on qualifications, experience, age, etc.) before gaining permission to enter the UK.

**Table 6.4: Different Tiers of the Points Based System (PBS)**

Tier	Target temporary migrant group	Sponsor required?	Replaces
Tier 1	Highly skilled migrants	No	Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP)
Tier 2	Skilled migrants with a job offer	Yes	Work permits scheme Intra corporate transfers
Tier 3	Low skilled workers (currently suspended)	-	Sector Based Schemes (SBS)
Tier 4	Students	Yes	Students
Tier 5	Temporary workers and youth mobility	Yes	Temporary routes, such as working holiday

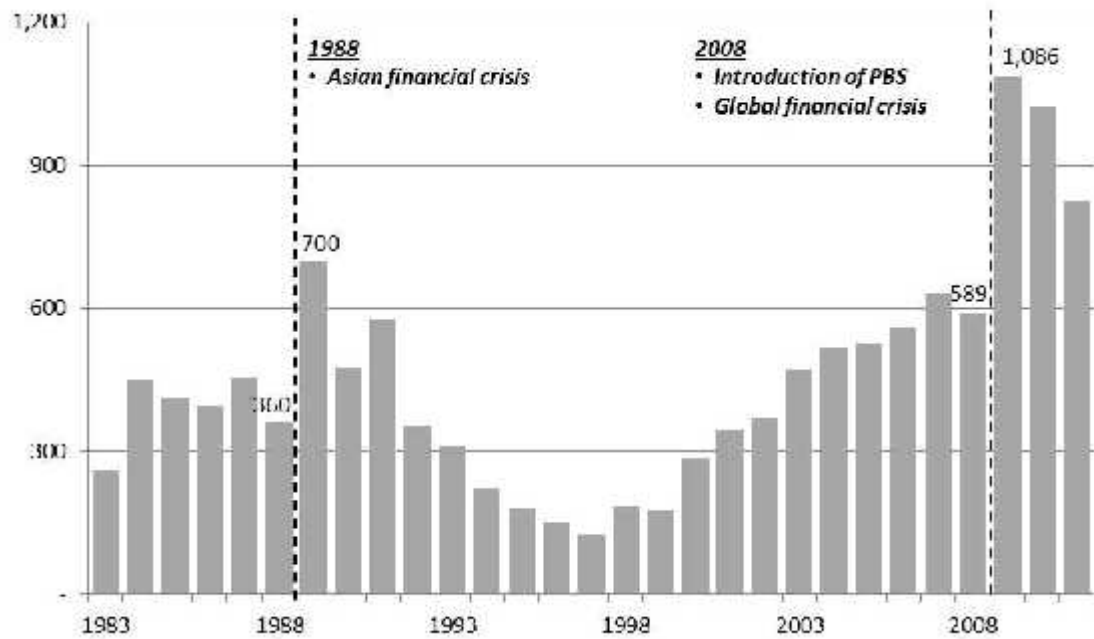
Source: Author

Since its introduction, the PBS has undergone numerous revisions and fine-tuning of specific policies. The current government's stance on immigration as temporary can be seen in a series of key changes to existing immigration policies (**Appendix A8**). Of note is the closure of Tier 1 (General), which allowed non-European Economic Area (EEA) migrants to enter the UK without secured work sponsorships, as well as the closure of the Post-Study-Work visa (PSW), which allowed non-EEA graduates from UK universities to work in the UK for up to two years after graduation. Additional conditions introduced within each tier also meant that it is increasingly difficult for migrants to enter and remain in the UK.

The increasingly stringent immigration policies have impacted on Malaysian migrants' citizenship considerations and migration geographies. Firstly, the number of Malaysian nationals who were granted British citizenship almost doubled between 2008 and 2009 (**Figure 6.10**). This suggests that perceived difficulties in obtaining valid UK visas might have pushed Malaysian migrants to acquire British citizenship to ensure continued residence. Secondly, there has been a shift towards citizenship granted by residence instead of by marriage, especially after 2008 (**Figure 6.11**). Although changes to family settlement policy (e.g. a new minimum income threshold for sponsoring foreign spouse and children; increasing probationary period from two to five years) only came into effect on 9 July 2012, the Immigration Minister had announced the UK government's intention to review the immigration policies as early as September 2010 (UKBA, 2010). This early announcement could have prompted migrants already in the UK to apply for British citizenship by residence rather than marriage.

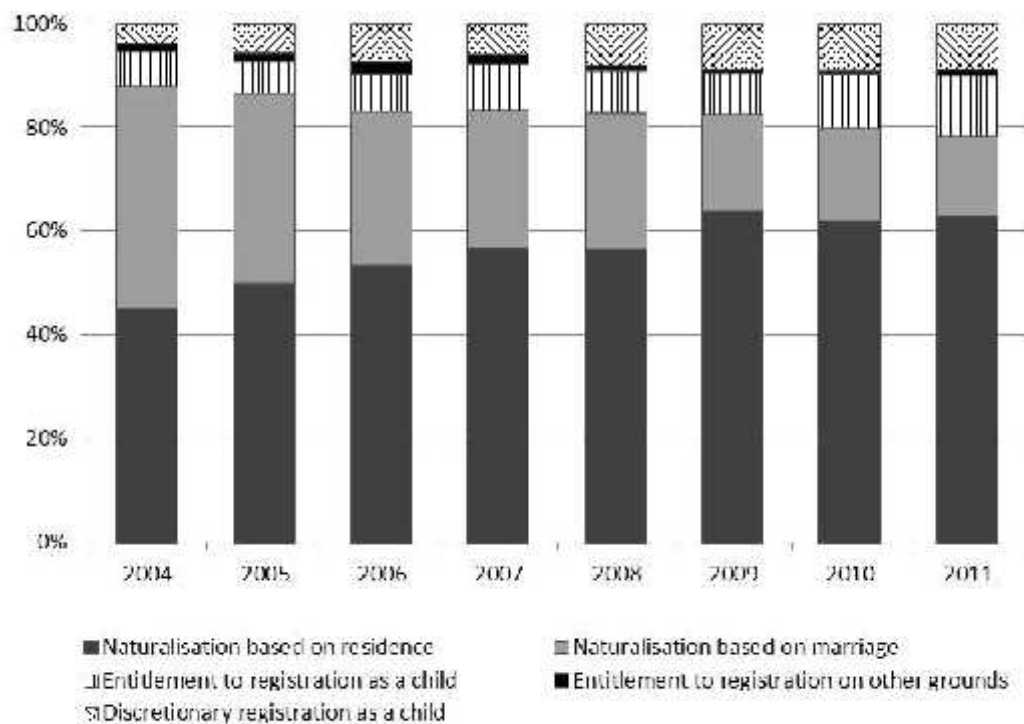


**Figure 6.10: British Citizenship Granted to Malaysian Nationals, 1983-2011**



Source: UK Home Office (2009; 2012)

**Figure 6.11: Types of British Citizenships Granted to Malaysian Nationals, 2006-2011**

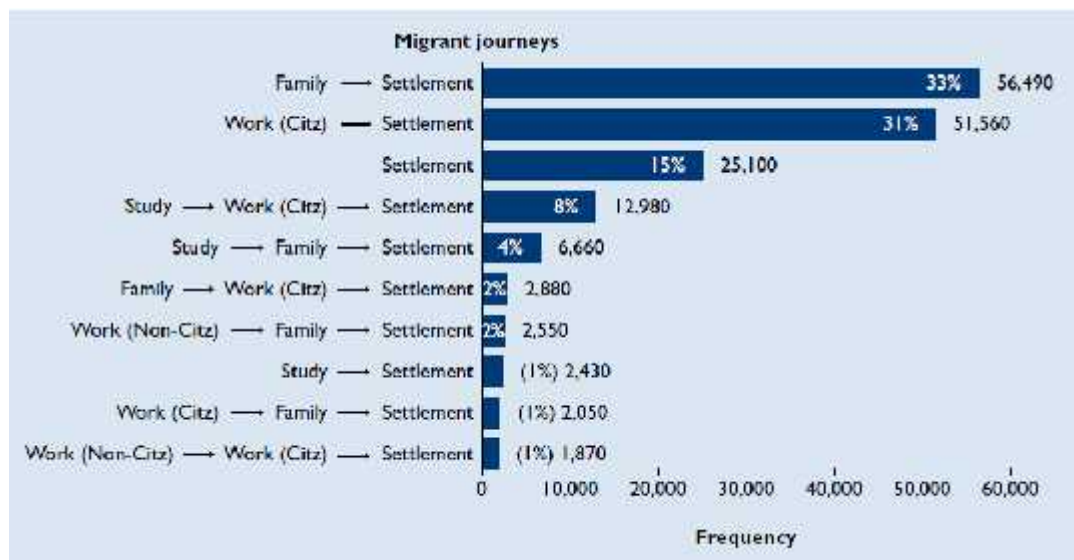


Note: Excluding entitlement to registration as an adult, entitlement to registration under section 5, and discretionary registration as an adult.

Source: UK Home Office (2012)

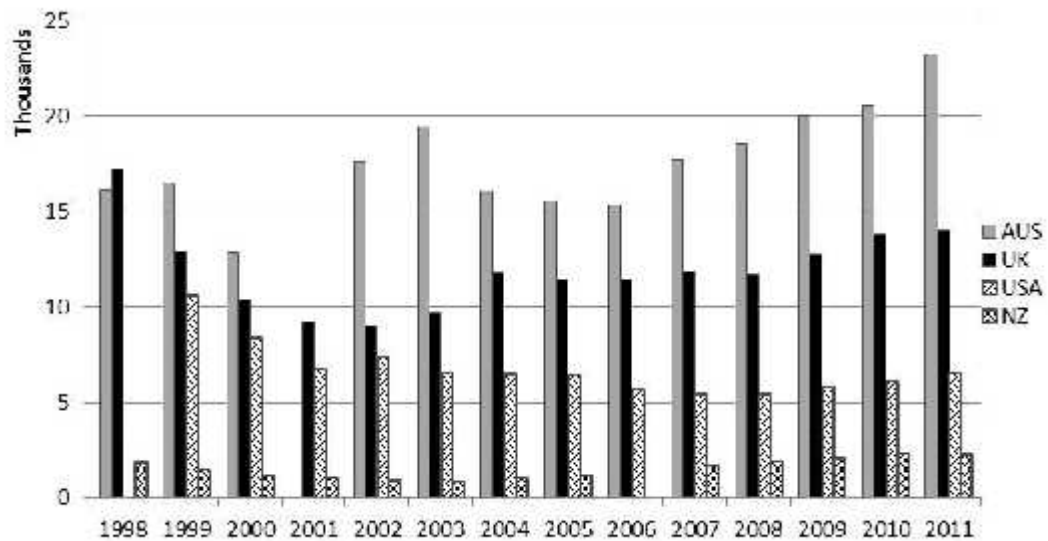
In a study of the 2004 non-EEA migrant cohort entering the UK, Achato, Eaton, and Jones (2010) found that 40% of those who entered through work-related citizenship pathways (i.e. highly skilled workers or those with a job offer in a shortage occupation) remained in the UK after five years. Of these, 72.5% achieved settlement after five years. The authors further found that the majority of migrants entering through student visas switched to the work-related citizenship route (12,980 cases) rather than the family route (6,660 cases), despite the latter route offering a shorter timeframe to settlement (**Figure 6.12**). This could possibly explain the increase in the proportion of citizenships granted by residence to Malaysians rather than by marriage, as indicated in **Figure 6.11**. This also suggests that some student migrants transit into work pathways, leading eventually to settlement in the UK. Indeed, this is typical amongst my respondents.

**Figure 6.12: Migration Paths by Migrants Granted Settlement in the UK, 2009**



Source: Achato, et al. (2010, p. 10)

Although student visa regulations have generally become stricter, Malaysia has been included in the list of low-risk countries for student visa applications in October 2012 (UKBA, 2012a). This means a streamlined application process where applicants would not be expected to provide documentary evidence for financial maintenance and student qualifications. Annual student migration to the UK appears to be increasing steadily since 2008 (**Figure 6.13**). However, the impact of recent immigration policy changes may not be visible at present due to a time lag before effects can be seen. Furthermore, the same period saw a larger increase in Malaysian students to Australia. This suggests a shift in Malaysian students' mobility destinations that could be correlated to changes in UK immigration policies.

**Figure 6.13: Students from Malaysia to Selected Countries, 1998-2011**

Notes: 1998-2009 data from UNESCO (2011b)

2010-2011 data from MOHE (2012)

Source: UIS (2011b); MOHE (2012)

### 6.3 Migration Pathways

In **Part II**, I argued that British colonial legacies further exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state resulted in a culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians. I highlighted how migratory movements have been a common way of life for people in the Malayan region. While the pre-colonial period saw small-scale, “voluntary” local and regional migrations; the colonial period saw large-scale, “involuntary” labour immigration and “squatter” resettlement migration. I have also argued that the constant shifting of territorial boundaries and the arbitrary amalgamation of political entities impacted upon the relative ambiguity associated with concepts of borders and sovereignty. This was perhaps at least true amongst the Malayan and Malaysian population until the late-1960s, following Singapore’s expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia.

The dual approach to Anglo-Malay versus vernacular education systems in colonial Malaya, as well as the *Bumiputera*-differentiated education system in post-colonial Malaysia has institutionalised a culture of migrating for overseas education. On the one hand, state-sponsored education migration, predominantly for *Bumiputera*-Malays, institutionalised temporary migration with the likelihood of postgraduate return to Malaysia to take up civil service positions. On the other hand, familial-sponsored education migration, predominantly

undertaken by non-*Bumiputeras*, is pursued as a means to social mobility and often times turn into permanent settlement.

These contextual factors impact upon Malaysia's culture of migration in two ways. First, migration and mobility is a common way of life, and thus perceived as something normal. This includes temporary and/or short-term migration between cities and states (e.g. for work or family), as well as longer-term migration at certain life stages (e.g. education or marriage). Crucially, the normalcy of migration is carried into mobile Malaysians' migration pathways. Thus, what we describe as "transnational" or "international" migration – assumed as a more-or-less permanent stay in a cross-border location – would perhaps be conceived by mobile Malaysians as a temporary stop in their circulatory and perpetual migrating lives. In this manner of thought, a stay of two to five years could be seen as temporary, with a view towards an eventual return to Malaysia which is perceived as the perpetual "home".

Second, this culture of migration is also inherently *Bumiputera*-differentiated. Here, two extreme examples capture this stratification. On the one hand, government scholars and civil servants – predominantly *Bumiputera*-Malays – are typically sent to Western and Commonwealth countries such as Australia, the UK, New Zealand and the US. On the other hand, MICSS students – predominantly non-*Bumiputera* Chinese – turn to Taiwan, Singapore and the USA because their UEC qualifications are recognised in these countries. This means that overseas Malaysian communities in specific geographies are stratified by the education systems they go through while they were educated in Malaysia. Given the *Bumiputera*-differentiated nature of the education system from the primary level onwards, this means that this education-inspired culture of migration continues to perpetuate the ethnic stratification introduced by the British colonial administration in the very first place.

### **6.3.1 Step Zero: "Internal" Migration**

#### **The Normalcy of Mobility**

Migration has been a part of family life for many Malaysians. In fact, many Malaysians today are descendants of immigrants from the Malay Archipelago, China and India (Kaur, 2006). As the majority of my respondents are within the 25-50 age range, this means they were born between 1960 and 1985.<sup>75</sup> During the same period, their parents would have been young

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<sup>75</sup> With the exception of two respondents (**S16** and **M10**) in their early 60s, i.e. born in 1950s.

adults. In order to understand how their early migration years (up to 20 years of age)<sup>76</sup> correspond to general migration trends in the Malaysian population, I examine census and migration survey data collected by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), especially between 1960 and 2005. I briefly discuss existing research on internal migration in Malaysia, and the accuracy and limitations of available data.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, mobility has been prevalent amongst the population residing in the region that is now known as Malaysia. Frequent changes to political and administrative boundaries – national, states and districts – meant that internal migration is often not as clearly distinguishable from mobility in general. Furthermore, decades of shared colonial history with Singapore meant that there has been relatively free mobility between the two politically-distinct countries. This includes the early years after Malaysia's independence in 1957, as Singapore was part of the Federation of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965.

After Singapore became an independent country in 1965, it was still possible for movements across the mile-long causeway for economic and social reasons (Hirschman, 1976, p. 453). This has also resulted in a situation where people living in Singapore and Malaysia arbitrarily became Malaysian or Singaporean citizens. **M10**, for example, held Singapore citizenship and a Malaysian red I/C (i.e. permanent resident), and lived in Malaysia for 19 years before leaving to work in East Asia. Although **M10** was officially a Singapore citizen, he thinks of himself as Malaysian and has “returned” to Malaysia for retirement.

### **Measuring Migration**

Macro-data on migration in Malaysia is projected from the population census. While census data has been collected since 1891, the first migration question was only asked in the 1957 census (Fernandez, Hawley, & Predaza, 1974, p. 37). Then, the focus was on inter-state lifetime migrants, i.e. migrants who shifted residence across a state boundary. Inter-state lifetime migrants in Peninsular Malaysia have increased from 4.7% in 1947 to 8.2% in 1957, and to 10.9% in 1970 (Jones & Sidhu, 1979). However, if migrants are defined as anyone residing outside his/her locality of birth, this increases to 38.6% in the 1970 population (**Table 6.5**). In other words, two out of every five persons have engaged in some form of migratory movement by 1970.

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<sup>76</sup> In the Malaysian public school system, students would normally complete secondary school at ages 17-18, and pre-university at ages 19-20.

**Table 6.5: Population by Migrant Status and State, Peninsula Malaysia, 1970 (%)**

State	Non-migrants	Migrants	Inter-locality migrants	Inter-locality, intra-state migrants	Inter-state migrants	Foreign migrants
Johor	61.8	38.2	3.4	17.2	6.4	11.2
Kedah	64.3	35.7	3.3	19.0	8.2	5.2
Kelantan	76.8	23.2	0.5	17.6	2.9	2.2
Malacca	69.8	30.2	1.8	8.2	11.8	8.5
Negeri Sembilan	56.1	43.9	6.5	10.5	15.6	11.3
Pahang	52.8	47.2	5.8	12.2	21.1	8.1
Penang	64.6	35.4	2.1	10.7	11.8	10.8
Perak	63.4	36.6	3.0	17.9	6.8	9.0
Perlis	62.9	37.1	2.2	17.2	13.5	4.2
Selangor	49.0	51.0	8.2	12.5	18.1	12.2
Trengganu	70.7	29.3	1.5	16.4	9.1	2.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>8.8</b>

Source: Adapted from Fernandez et al. (1974, p. 44)

Between 1957 and 1970, there was significant net emigration from Peninsular Malaysia: approximately 5.6% of the 1970 population have emigrated.<sup>77</sup> While some could have migrated permanently to Singapore, the number does not capture the “unhindered mobility ... with a heavy to and fro traffic consisting of visitors, daily commuters, and temporary and permanent migrants across the causeway joining Singapore to the peninsula” (Hirschman, 1975, p. 42). In the 1990s, it is estimated that about 24,000 Malaysians cross the causeway on a daily basis (*The Star*, 1991, Feb 13, quoted in Pillai, 1992, p. 25). By the 2000s, this had grown to 150,000 (*New Straits Times*, 2009).

In the late twentieth century, migration propensity within the Malaysian population is significantly higher than its Asian counterparts. Comparing census data (late-1990s to early-2000s) across 28 countries (of which 22 are developing countries), Bell and Muhidin (2009) find that while there is moderate five-year internal migration propensity in Malaysia, this is double that of other Asian countries (post-1990 China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Philippines). Across these Asian countries, five-year internal migration intensity peaks in the early twenties age range, and falls sharply to low mobility beyond age 40. Here, again, Malaysia demonstrates the highest migration intensity amongst the Asian countries.

<sup>77</sup> Calculated from Hirschman’s (1975) estimations: 490,000 net emigration from Peninsular Malaysia compared to the 1970 Malaysia population of 8.7 million.

**Inter-State Migration Flows**

The 1970 census introduced questions on place of birth, place of previous residence and duration of residence (Fernandez, et al., 1974, pp. 37-38). These enabled the calculations of intercensal residential change, which defined the estimations of internal migration. To date, international migration census data excludes migrants from Malaysia to other countries. Thus, migration, as defined for the purpose of statistical data collection, means *internal* migration. More specifically, it means inter- and intra-state migration.

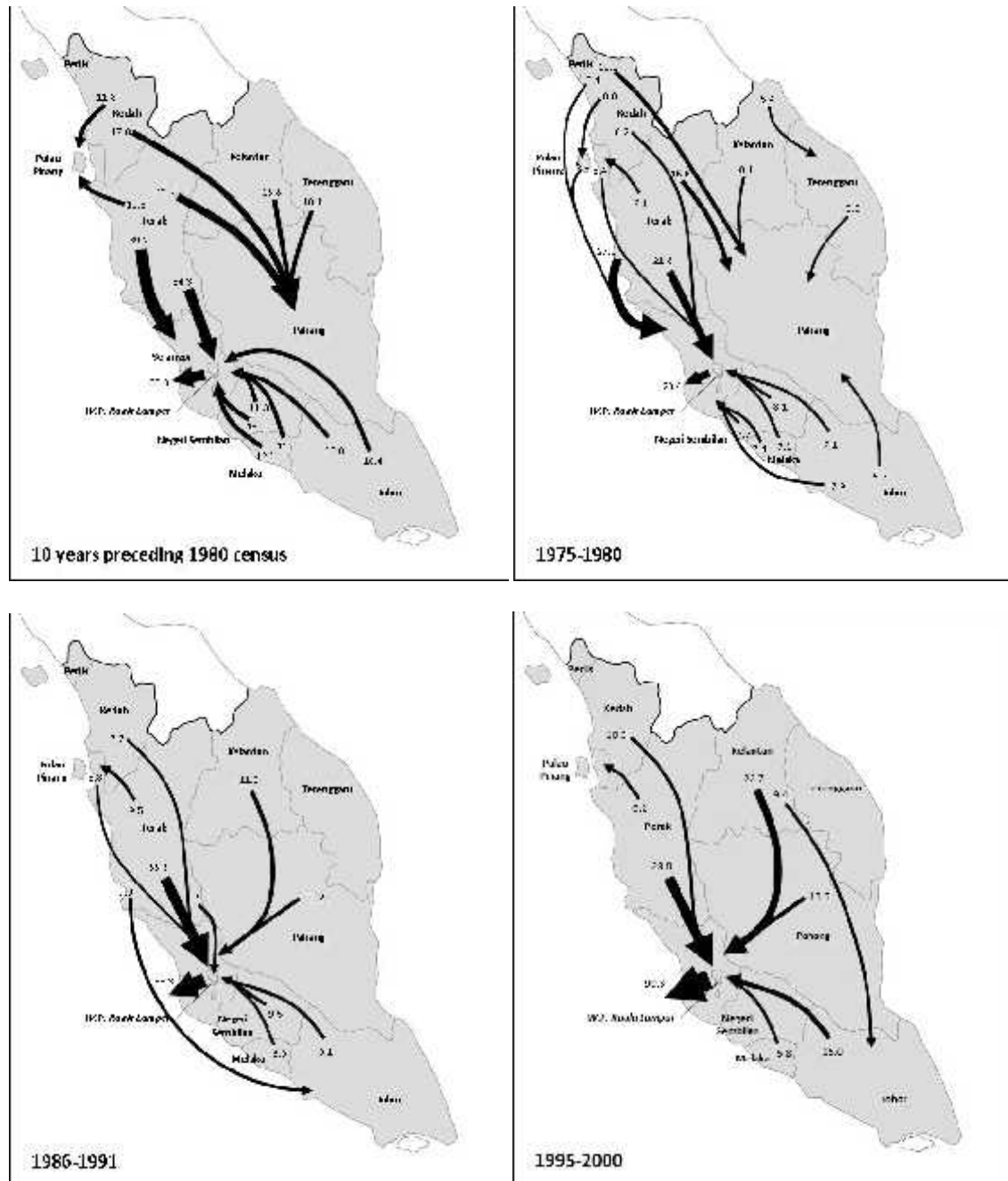
Malaysia's Department of Statistics (DOSM) publishes annual internal migration survey reports from 1992/93 onwards, as well as annual special release migration surveys from 2007. However, there are limitations to the data. Firstly, migration is defined as "change in the district or state of residence between the two reference dates" (DOSM, 1996, p. 3). Thus, any migration without change in official residence status would not be recorded. Secondly, data is only collected for lifetime migration, five-year inter-state migration and five-year intra-state migration. Thus, any change in residence lasting for less than five years would not have been captured. Thirdly, estimations are projected from census data collected every ten years. Thus, these are subjected to sampling and non-sampling errors.

Due to limitations in the way internal migration data is collected, available research on Malaysia's internal migration has tended to focus on specific cohorts and eras, thus lacking a comprehensive picture across the decades. From the 1970s onwards, studies of internal migration in Malaysia (see Saw, 2005 for an extensive list) have focused on population distribution and regional development (Pryor, 1972, 1974, 1979b), mobility and urbanisation (Abdul Samad Haji Abdul Hadi, 1989; Hirschman, 1976; Mohd Razani Mohd Jali, 2009), ethnic differences in rural-urban mobility (Hirschman & Yeoh, 1979), and data estimation issues (Saw, 1980).

Until 1970, Selangor and Pahang were the largest internal migration receiving states, while Perak, Kelantan, Melaka and Kedah were the largest sending states (**Table 6.5**; Pryor, 1979a). Similar trends continued from 1975 to 1980 (**Figure 6.14**). Inter-state lifetime migration ratio increased from 96 in 1970 to 143 in 1980, a sign of increased internal mobility (DOSM, 1983, p. 63). From 1986 to 1991, major internal migration flows shifted to Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (WPKL), with Perak, Kelantan, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan being the largest sending states. From 1995 to 2000, Johor and Pulau Pinang emerged as destination

states. From 2006 to 2010, internal migration flows appear to be predominantly movements from Selangor to the other states (Figure 6.15).

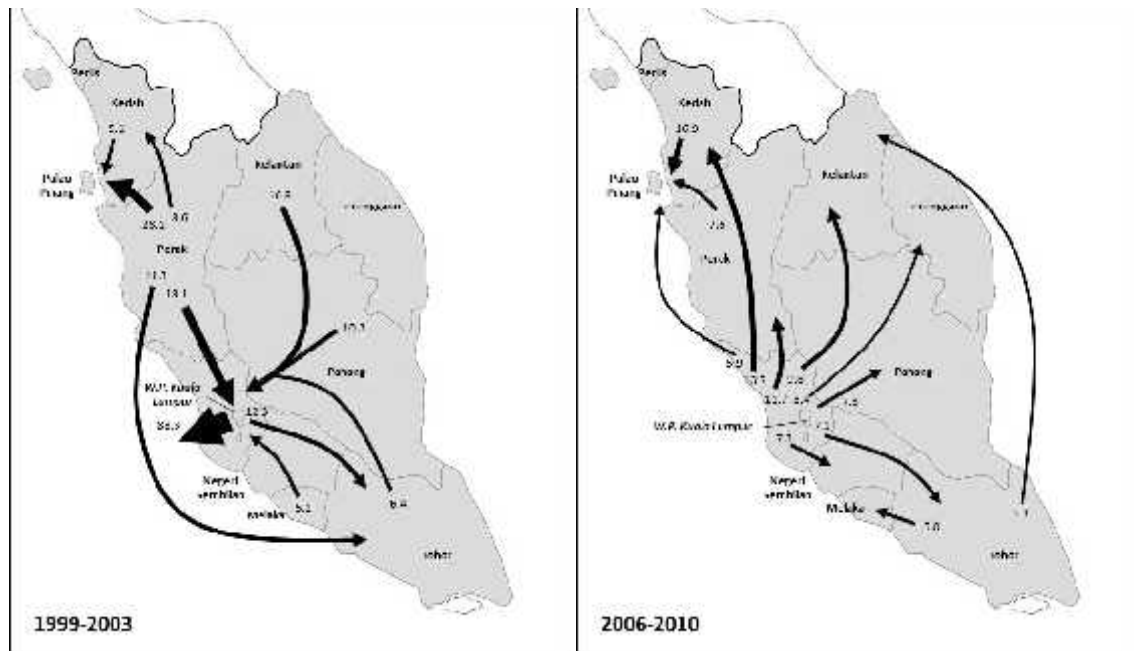
**Figure 6.14: Net Inter-State Migration Flows (5,000 Persons or More), Peninsular Malaysia, 10 Years Preceding 1980 Census, 1975-1980, 1986-1991 and 1995-2000**



Source: DOSM (1983); DOSM (1995, p. 89); DOSM (2005, p. 71)



**Figure 6.15: Net Inter-State Migration Flows (5,000 Persons or More), Malaysia, 1999-2003 and 2006-2010**



*Note: Excluding migration flows from W.P. Kuala Lumpur*

Source: Author, calculated from DOSM (2012c)

These interstate migration flows could be understood as outcomes of government strategic plans and policies. The high proportion of migrants to Selangor during the 1970s could be attributed to rapid urbanisation in the Kuala Lumpur area as a result of government policies promoting Malay rural-urban migration to Chinese-dominated urban centres (Nagata, 1974). In the 1970s and 1980s, internal migration flows more or less corresponded to structural changes introduced under the New Economic Policy (NEP). During this period, intra-rural migration was predominant amongst the Malay and Indian ethnic groups, while intra-urban migration was prevalent amongst the Chinese (Chitose, 2003, p. 1195). The former is in part a result of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) rural land development projects, which prioritised poor landless Malays as settlers, while Indians were recruited as labourers. The latter reflects the geographical distribution of the Chinese in urban areas since their immigrant ancestors first settled in Malaya.

In the 1990s, urban infrastructure projects such as Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) (including the new government administrative centre, Putrajaya, and Cyberjaya), Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and the North-South Expressway facilitated the development of KL and its surrounding areas as migration destinations. Johor and Pulau Pinang are major migration destinations with the rapid development of their capital cities, Johor Bahru (JB) and

Georgetown respectively. JB benefits from its proximity to Singapore, as well as the government's plans for its development as the southern corridor<sup>78</sup> (Mohd Razani Mohd Jali, 2009, p. 187).

### **6.3.2 Step One: Migrating for Education**

#### **Preference for Overseas Education**

In **Part II**, I have traced how overseas education – as a symbol of social prestige, as well as a means for employment and social mobility – is inherently a colonial legacy further institutionalised in post-colonial Malaysia. Indeed, overseas education has been seen as “a passport to lifelong security, comfort, and status” (Selvaratnam, 1988, p. 183). There is generally a preference for British education, although this has expanded to include Western education more generally. Hirschman (1975, p. 44), for example, notes that Malaysian students have been pursuing overseas college and university education in England, Australia, New Zealand and other countries.

In the 1972 country report for the Colombo Plan meeting, it was noted that there were 10,000 to 12,000 overseas Malaysian students in Commonwealth countries between late-1960s to early 1970s; and that a total of 9,969 private students were sponsored by government scholarships to Great Britain (56.2%), Australia (26.8%), New Zealand (13.2%), Indonesia (3.2%) and Pakistan (0.7%) between 1967 and 1970 (Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-east Asia & Colombo Plan Bureau, 1972, p. 103). By the mid-1970s, it was estimated that there were 20,000 overseas Malaysian students (The Treasury, 1975, p. 79).

As I explained in **Section 5.2.3**, the post-colonial Malaysian government's dual approach to higher education, couched under the philosophy of affirmative action, meant that non-*Bumiputera* Malaysians faced fierce competition in gaining university placements. Under the NEP, quotas were introduced for public university placements. This was further compounded by limited university places. In 1971, about 3,000 out of 8,062 applicants (37.2%) were admitted into the three existing public universities (UNESCO, 1973, p. 102). In 1988, only 15.7% of 54,557 applicants gained public university admissions (Zainal Ghani, 1990, p. 6). Between 1970 and 1983, the number of Malaysian students overseas has more than doubled from 24,000 to 58,000 (**Table 6.6**).

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<sup>78</sup> This includes the Iskandar Development Region (IDR) and South Johor Economic Region (SJER).

On the other hand, and as I explained in **Section 4.3.2**, historical ties with Britain and the British education tradition had instilled a sense of elitist education ideology (Denny, 1999, p. 17), where overseas degrees from elite universities are prized and prioritised. Furthermore, education was perceived as a key tool in restructuring the social, political and economic imbalance between ethnic groups (Zainal Ghani, 1990, p. 8). To this end, one of the strategies is to send students for overseas higher education on government scholarships. In the early 1980s, there were 12,800 such students (Malaysia, 1984, p. 354). This is a substantial proportion, considering that the total enrolment in local and overseas tertiary education in 1980 was 41,454 (**Table 6.7**).

**Table 6.6: Malaysian Students Overseas, 1970-1983**

Year	Number of students
1970	24,000
1978	36,000
1980	39,908
1981	48,879
1983	58,000

Source: Reid (1988)

**Table 6.7: Enrolment in Tertiary Education, 1980 and 1985**

Year	Institutions overseas	Total enrolment (including Malaysian public universities)	% overseas
1980	19,510	41,454	47.1%
1985	22,684	60,522	37.5%

Source: Malaysia (1986)

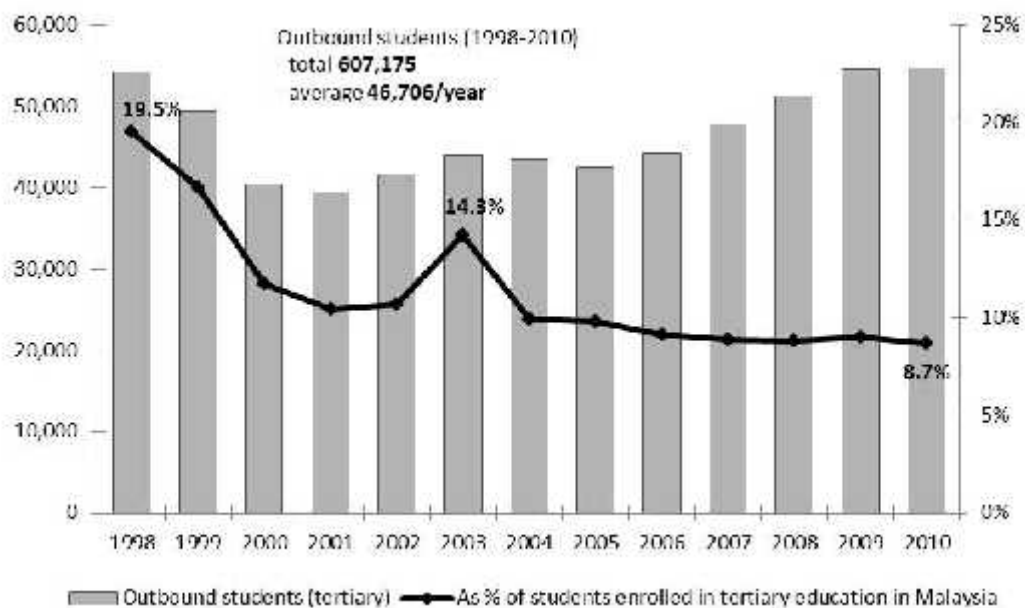
The inclination for overseas education has continued until today. For example, Pyvis and Chapman (2007) found that Malaysian students often associated international education with Western education and qualifications. Denny (1999, pp. 76-77) also observed an “unmeasured and unquantifiable desire” for overseas education amongst Malaysians, and suggests that this could be a sign of Malaysians seeking an international perspective as a result of colonial rule and immigration. Overseas education is also perceived to be of a higher quality (i.e. more competitive, better learning process, English as a teaching medium) and more marketable for postgraduate employment. For parents contemplating emigration, sending their children overseas for education is often a first step towards preparing for their eventual emigration (Zainal Ghani, 1990, p. 12).

### **Student Migrant Stocks**

Indeed, Malaysia has become one of the top countries with internationally-mobile students. In the 1980s, significant proportions of Malaysian students enrolled in higher education programmes were overseas (**Table 6.7**). From 1998 to 2010, Malaysia's student migrant stock totalled 607,175, with an annual average of 46,706 (**Figure 6.16**). From 2000 onwards, Malaysia has been one of the top twelve international student sending countries (**Figure 6.17**). Malaysia's outbound mobility ratio, which measures the number of students studying abroad as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in the country, seems to have dropped from 2000 to 2009 (**Figure 6.18**). However, this indicator is significantly higher than that of the other top student-sending countries. This suggests that migration for tertiary education is a prevalent phenomenon in Malaysia.

At first glance, the proportion of outbound students as compared to students enrolled in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia appears to have decreased between 1998 to 2010 (**Figure 6.16**). This, however, could be explained by a number of reasons. First, there has been an increase in the number of public institutions of higher learning in Malaysia since the 1990s (see **Section 5.2.3**). Increased number of places in public universities provided an alternative other than defaulting to overseas education.

**Figure 6.16: Outbound Mobile Students from Malaysia, 1998-2010**



Source: UIS (2011a); DOSM (2001, 2006, 2011b)

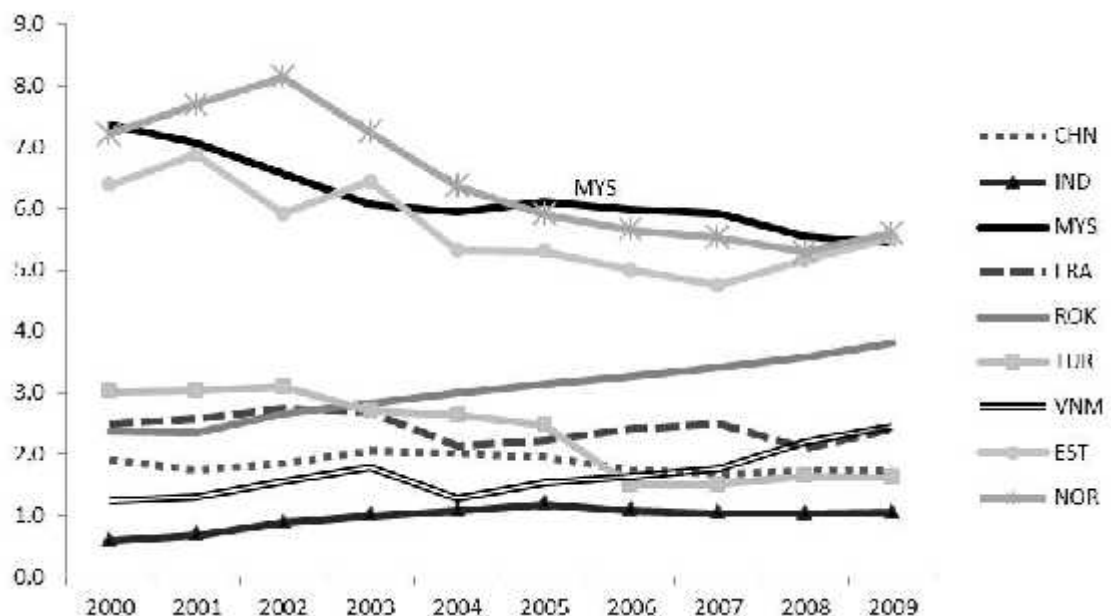
**Figure 6.17: Top Twelve Countries with Outbound Mobile Students, 2000-2010**

	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
1	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN	CHN
2	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	KOR	KOR
3	DEU	KOR	KOR	KOR	KOR	KOR	KOR	KOR	KOR	IND	GRC
4	PRK	DEU	DEU	DEU	DEU	JPN	JPN	JPN	JPN	GRC	JPN
5	MYS	MYS	USA	JPN	JPN	DEU	DEU	DEU	DEU	JPN	IND
6	USA	USA	MYS	FRA	FRA	TUR	TUR	FRA	FRA	DEU	DEU
7	FRA	FRA	JPN	USA	USA	USA	MAR	MAR	GRC	FRA	FRA
8	KOR	TUR	KAZ	MYS	MYS	FRA	GRC	TUR	MAR	TUR	TUR
9	RUS	RUS	FRA	CAN	CAN	MAR	USA	GRC	TUR	ITA	ITA
10	TUR	CAN	CAN	RUS	MAR	CAN	FRA	USA	USA	MAR	MAR
11	CAN	JPN	RUS	MAR	RUS	MYS	MYS	ITA	ITA	USA	MYS
12	VNM	VNM	TUR	TUR	TUR	GRC	CAN	MYS	MYS	MYS	USA

**Notes:**

1. Country codes based on ISO 3166 published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
2. "Internationally mobile students (or mobile students)" are students who have crossed a national border and moved to another country with the objective of studying. This includes prior education qualification obtained in another country other than the country of origin. The data covers the tertiary education level only.

Source: UIS (2011a)

**Figure 6.18: Student Outbound Mobility Ratio, Selected Countries, 2000-2009**

Note: Data for DEU, RPK, USA, RUS and CAN are not available.

Source: UIS (2011a)

Second, there has also been an increase in the number of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia following the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996. It is common for these private institutions to offer upper-secondary programmes such as GCE ‘A’ Levels and Australian Matriculation diplomas, as well as twinning programmes with overseas universities. Under such programmes, students would engage in “transnational” study arrangements – splitting time between a Malaysian private institution and the partner overseas university – and awarded the partner university’s degree qualification (see MOHE, 2010). This meant that these students would have been excluded from being counted statistically as “outbound mobile students” although they would have “migrated” for their education.

### **Destinations**

Malaysian students have been pursuing higher education in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. In the early 1960s, there were 2,160 Malaysians students studying in selected Commonwealth countries (**Table 6.8**). In 1968, 54.6% (8,000 out of 14,629) overseas Malaysian students were studying in Australia, Great Britain or New Zealand (Takei, et al., 1973, p. 23). The USA and Canada have also been popular destinations (**Figure 6.19**). Australia remains the largest receiving country due to its geographical proximity to Malaysia, as well being a former British colony and member state of the Commonwealth. The UK is a second choice, partly due to the British colonial connection and a similar education system.

**Table 6.8: Number of Malaysian Students, Selected Commonwealth Countries**

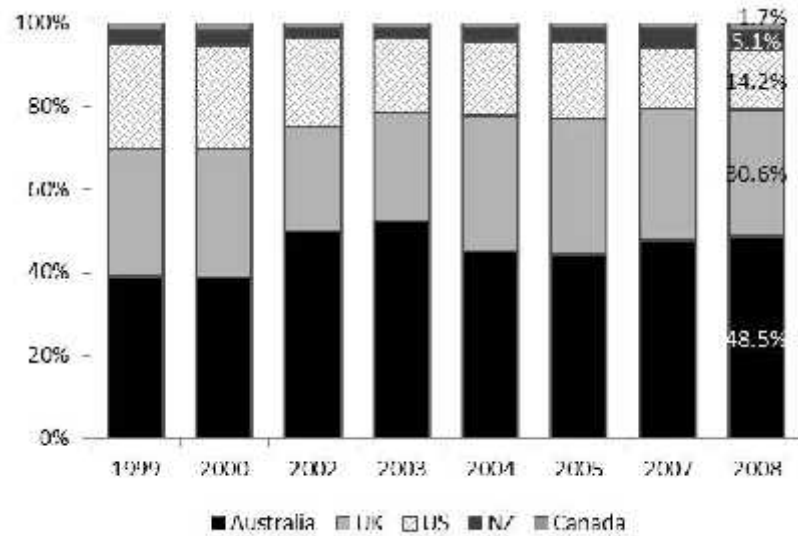
Country	Number
Australia (1962)	1,280
India (1960-61)	330
UK (1962-63)	320
New Zealand (1962)	120
Hong Kong (1962)	60
Canada (1961-62)	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,160</b>

Source: UNESCO (1965, p. 20)

Other than these Western countries, Singapore and Taiwan are also popular education destinations for Malaysian students. In addition to Singapore’s geographical proximity and shared socio-cultural contexts, the Singapore government has also been actively recruiting Malaysian students since the late 1960s. In 1969, Singapore’s Ministry of Education started offering the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Scholarship for ASEAN nationals

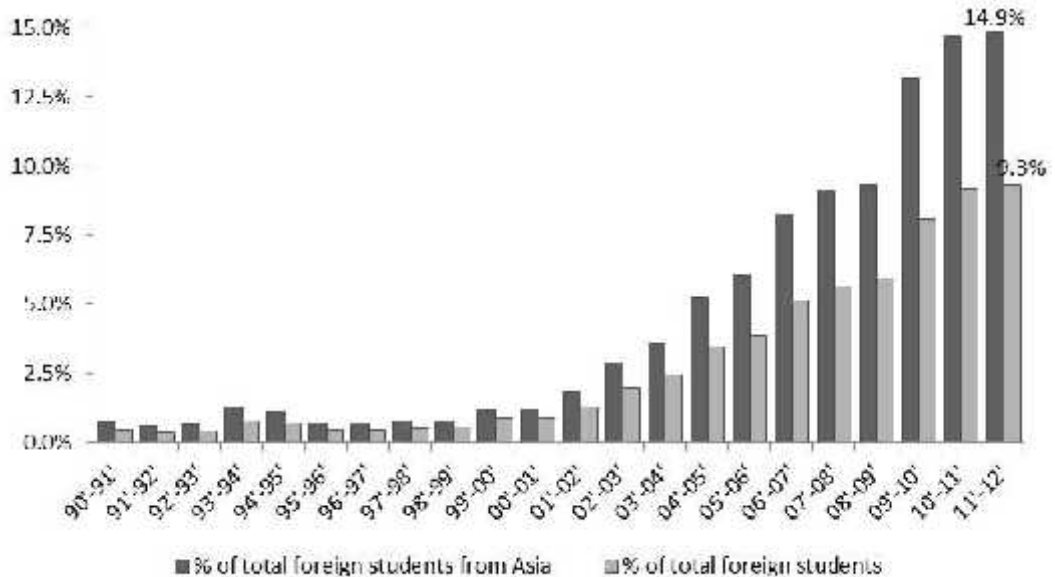
to pursue pre-university education in Singapore (Ho & Tyson, 2011). This coincided with Malaysia's affirmative action policies in public university entries. Furthermore, the Tuition Grant Scheme, introduced by the Singapore government in 1980, offered highly-subsidised tertiary education tuition fees in exchange for three years of postgraduate employment with a Singapore-registered or Singapore-based company (MOE, 2009).

**Figure 6.19: Share of Malaysian Students in Selected Countries, Selected Years**



Source: UIS (2011b)

**Figure 6.20: Malaysian Students in Taiwan's Foreign Student Population, 1990-2011**



Source: Ministry of Education Taiwan (2011)

Taiwan has also emerged as a popular tertiary education destination, particularly for Malaysian students who were schooled in Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (MICSS).<sup>79</sup> Students in these schools take the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) which is administered by the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM). The UEC is not recognised by Malaysian public universities for admissions, although it is recognised by other tertiary education institutes in various countries, including Taiwan (UCSCAM, 2012). The number of Malaysian students studying in Taiwanese universities has increased from a mere 27 in 1990/91, to 425 in 2005/06, and to 2286 in 2011/12 (Ministry of Education Taiwan, 2011). Malaysia's share of foreign university students to Taiwan has also increased, especially between the 2008/09 and 2009/10 academic years (**Figure 6.20**).

### **Acquiring Education After Migration**

Key to my concept of culture of migration in Malaysia is the argument that mobile Malaysians moved out of Malaysia in the first instance for the purpose of education. Given that education is understood and practised as a strategy for individual and familial social mobility, the culture of migration begins *before* mobile Malaysians reach the stage for higher education. This is also influenced by Malaysia's highly-stratified education system inherited as British colonial legacy: Anglo-Malay schools have received the most attention and government funding, while Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools were dealt with in a *laissez-faire* approach. Students from Anglo-Malay schools would generally enjoy competitive advantage compared to, for example, students from Chinese independent schools. These structural factors in Malaysia's education system ultimately affect parents' decisions about which types of schools to send their children to as early as the primary school stage.

Beine, Docquier and Rapoport (2006) used age of entry to OECD countries as a proxy to determine whether migrants gained education before or after migration. They found that Malaysia's brain drain ratios (*vis-à-vis* brain drain 0+) are 85.7% for brain drain 12+, 75.7% for brain drain 18+, and 61.7% for brain drain 22+. These are considered one of the lower ratios for countries with over 0.25 million population. This implies that Malaysian emigrants obtain their education *after* migration. This could be a third reason to explain the decreasing proportion of outbound students compared to students enrolled for tertiary education in Malaysia. In other words, students left Malaysia for secondary or pre-tertiary education (after 12 or 18 years old), rather than for tertiary and further education. This supports my hypothesis that there has been a culture of migrating for education amongst mobile Malaysians.

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<sup>79</sup> See Freedman (2001) and Kua (2008a) for historical and socio-political accounts.



### 6.3.3 Step Two: Long-Term Residence

#### Geographical Distributions

Since the 1970s, the Malaysian government has been aware that not all overseas university students returned to Malaysia after graduation. Between 1968 and 1972, 583 out of 655 Malaysian students in Australia returned to Malaysia, while 72 were granted permanent residence in Australia (Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-east Asia & Colombo Plan Bureau, 1972, p. 104). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Malaysian migrants with tertiary education in OECD countries increased by 40.8% (**Table 6.9**). Given the previous discussion about how Malaysian migrants gained education qualifications after migration, this increase could possibly be attributed to non-returning student migrants.

As I suggested in **Section 6.3.1**, there are specific geographies of overseas Malaysians stratified by their education pathways. While on the whole, a third of overseas Malaysians are tertiary-educated (The World Bank, 2011), actual proportions differ in each destination country (**Figure 6.21**). This is also evident in the sectors they are engaged in (**Table 6.10**). For example, 35% of tertiary-educated Malaysians in the UK are engaged in the health and social work sector. It is well-known that many Malaysian students study medicine, nursing, pharmacy and healthcare disciplines in the UK and Ireland.

**Table 6.9: Number of Malaysians with Tertiary-Education in OECD Countries**

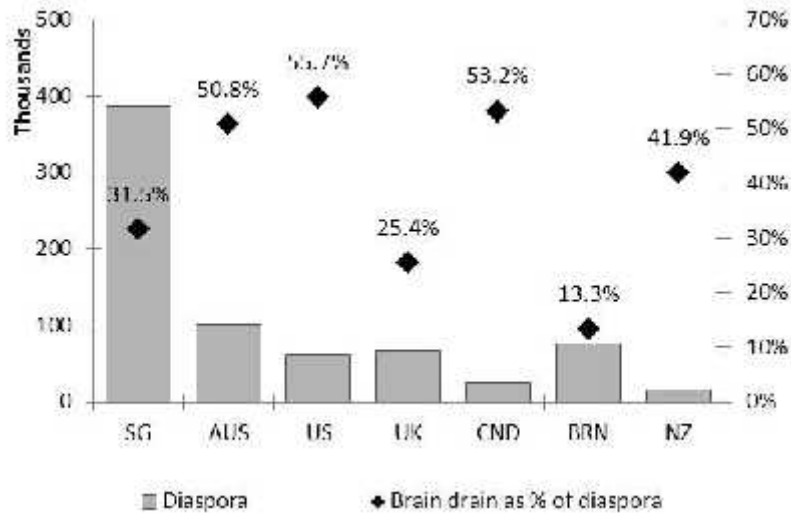
Resident in	1990	2000	Increase (%)
Australia	34,716	39,601	14.07
United States	12,315	24,695	100.53
United Kingdom	9,812	16,190	65.00
Canada	8,480	12,170	43.51
New Zealand	4,719	5,157	9.28
Others	2,607	4,508	72.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,649</b>	<b>102,321</b>	<b>40.84</b>

Source: Docquier and Marfouk (2004)

Working backwards from the number of tertiary-educated Malaysians in selected overseas education destinations, it appears that many do stay on after graduation (**Table 6.11**). The retention rate is especially high in the UK, at 133.3% in 2000 and 71.1% in 2010. The high percentage in 2000 could be due to immigration of tertiary-educated Malaysians who have acquired tertiary education outside of the UK. The retention rate in Australia seems to have fallen from 41.7% to 34.3% between 2000 and 2010. One possible explanation could be that

student migrants moved to Singapore for their postgraduate employment due to Singapore's economic growth and favourable labour migration policies in the 2000s.

**Figure 6.21: Estimated Malaysian Diaspora and Brain Drain (25+), 2010**



Source: The World Bank (2011, p. 140)

**Table 6.10: Sectors Engaged by Tertiary-Educated Malaysian Migrants in Selected OECD Countries, 2000**

Australia	United States	United Kingdom	Canada	New Zealand
Health & social work (24%)	Real estate, renting and business activities (17%)	Health & social work (35%)	Real estate, renting and business activities (22%)	Financial mediation (24%)
Real estate, renting and business activities (21%)	Manufacturing (16%)	Real estate, renting and business activities (21%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	Construction (14%)
Education (9%)	Education (14%)	Education (10%)	Health & social work (12%)	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (11%)
			Financial mediation (12%)	Education (11%)

Note: Based on 2000 census, or Eurostat labour force survey averaged over 1998-2002.

Source: OECD (2012b)

**Table 6.11: Estimation of the Proportion of Malaysian Tertiary-Educated Migrants Staying On After Graduation**

Destination	2000s			2010s		
	2000 <sup>a</sup>	1998 <sup>b</sup>	Stay on	2010 <sup>a</sup>	2007 <sup>b</sup>	Stay on
Australia	38,620	16,118	41.7%	51,556	17,691	34.3%
US	24,085	-	-	34,045	5,398	15.9%
UK	12,898	17,197	133.3%	16,609	11,811	71.1%
New Zealand	4,221	1,892	44.8%	7,608	1,727	22.7%

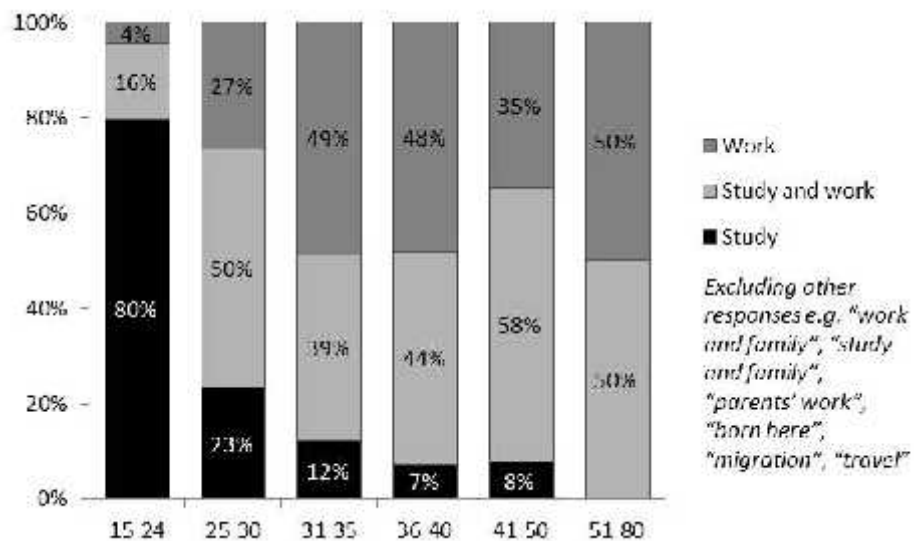
Notes:

- Assuming three-year degree programmes, tertiary-educated Malaysians in 2010 would have entered the respective countries as international students in 2007.
- 1998 international student data is used for 2000 as 1997 data is not available.

Sources: <sup>a</sup>The World Bank (2011, p. 140); <sup>b</sup>UIS (2011a)

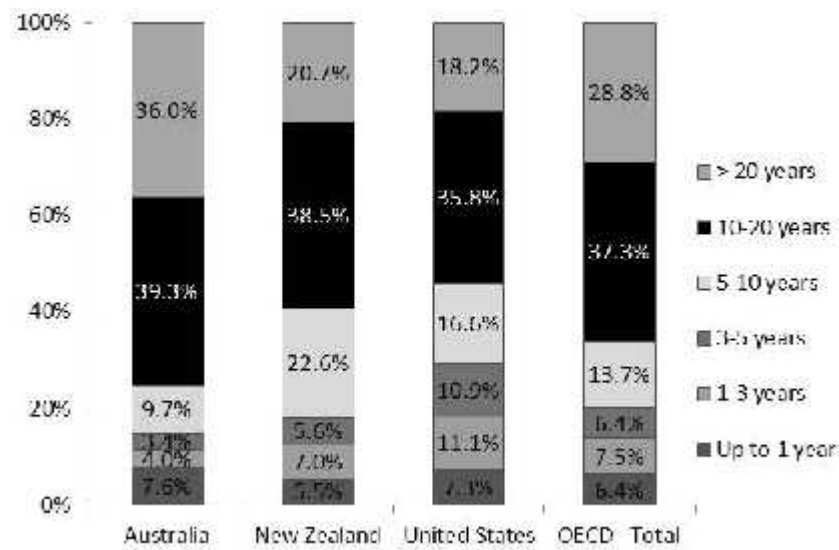
### **Reasons and Durations of Stays**

In an online survey ( $n=518$ ) of overseas Malaysians conducted by Wake Up Call in February 2012, it appears that a substantial proportion stayed on for work after their overseas studies (Figure 6.22). This is particularly significant amongst the 41-50 age group, followed by the 25-30 and 51-80 age groups. The relatively smaller proportions of stayers in the 31-35 and 36-40 age groups could be explained by higher transnational career mobilities during their prime career years. In other words, they could have moved to another location for work after their overseas education.

**Figure 6.22: Reasons for Overseas Malaysians Residing in Current Locations, By Age Group**

Source: Calculated from Wake Up Call (2012) dataset

**Figure 6.23: Durations of Stays of Tertiary-Educated Malaysian-Born Migrants in Selected OECD Countries, 2000**



Note: Based on 2000 census, or Eurostat labour force survey averaged over 1998-2002.

Source: OECD (2012a)

Based on year 2000 censuses, the majority of tertiary-educated Malaysians have resided in selected OECD countries between 10-20 years (**Figure 6.23**). This is followed by stays of more than 20 years. Taking the information from **Figures 6.22** and **6.23** together, this means that there has been a culture of migrating for education *and* staying on in their destinations for a significant part of their adult lives. If, following Beine et al.'s (2006) findings, we assume that Malaysian emigrants left Malaysia between 12-18 years old, they would be in the age range of 22-38 years old after residing overseas for 10-20 years. This is a young and economically active age group who are still relatively mobile.

#### 6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I developed my argument that a culture of migration amongst mobile Malaysians can be understood as an outcome of British colonial legacies inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state. I use culture of migration to mean firstly, that *migration/mobility is a common, accepted way of life* for individuals and their families; and secondly, that *migrating for education has become an internalised social mobility strategy* that may not be consciously recognised as a way to negotiate structural constraints posed by the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies.

First, I provided an overview of the state of emigration, especially to Singapore and London/UK. These are popular destinations for mobile Malaysians for temporary or permanent residence. Citizenship, permanent residence and visa regulations impact on mobile Malaysians' migration pathways. The increasingly stringent immigration and citizenship policies in Singapore and the UK might not affect migration trajectories of mobile Malaysians who have already acquired formal residence permits in these countries. However, these policies will impact on their current and future citizenship and migration decisions.

Second, I examined the migration pathways circumscribing mobile Malaysians' migration trajectories. These include internal migration, migrating for education, and longer-term stays after graduation. There is high mobility within the Malaysian population since independence to the present, including movements across the Peninsular Malaysia-Singapore causeway. Due to geopolitical changes, historical legacies and government strategic plans, mobility has been common and a way of life. Intra-rural migration has been common amongst the Malay and Indian ethnic groups, while the Chinese ethnic group engaged mainly in intra-urban migration.

There has been a long history of overseas higher education for Malaysian students. Before the 1970s, students were sent on government scholarships to the UK, Australia and New Zealand. After the implementation of the NEP in 1970, race-based university placement quotas induced non-*Bumiputera* students to migrate for education. Popular Western destinations include Australia, UK, USA, New Zealand and Canada. Singapore and Taiwan are also popular choices, particularly for students with UEC qualifications. Research suggests that Malaysian students could have migrated before they reached the higher education stage. This supports my argument that Malaysia's stratified education translates into the stratified nature of the culture of migration amongst her mobile Malaysians.

In addition to a culture of migrating for education amongst mobile Malaysians, there is also an accompanying culture of staying on for work after graduation. This could either be in the same education destination country, or a third country. From estimations, it appears that the retention rate is significantly high in the UK. Based on a recent online survey, the majority of the existing Malaysian diaspora had stayed on for work after their studies. This is particularly common amongst the 41-50 age group. More than half of the tertiary-educated Malaysians in selected OECD countries have resided in their destination countries for more than ten years.

Taken altogether, the culture of migration has implications for mobile Malaysians' migration pathways. First, migration is seen as temporary and circulatory. This affects how mobile

Malaysians understand and conceptualise their individual migration trajectories vis-à-vis Malaysia as their perpetual “home”. Second, migration pathways are inherently *Bumiputera*-differentiated, since they originate from the *Bumiputera*-differentiated nature of the education system. This translates into the stratified nature of overseas Malaysian communities. This also implies that mobile Malaysian communities have specific geographies. In other words, each diasporic community is a self-perpetuating social stratification of the Malaysian society.

I have argued that one of the legacies inherited from the British colonial administration is the making real of racial stereotypes and social stratification along racial lines. The social stratification is further institutionalised through the education system, which is subsequently transformed by the post-colonial Malaysian state into one that is *Bumiputera*-differentiated. Over time, this creates *specific geographies of mobile Malaysians*, even though education has been a common trigger for the culture of migration in the first place. Thus, Malaysia’s culture of migration can be understood as an outcome of British colonial legacies in terms of how the legacies have led to the initiation, development, and self-perpetuation of migration pathways.

## CHAPTER 7. TRACING MIGRATION GEOGRAPHIES

In **Chapter 6**, I argued that the culture of migration, an outcome of colonial legacies exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state, produces specific geographies in mobile Malaysians' migration that are inherently linked to their education pathways. This chapter develops this argument by tracing mobile Malaysians' migration geographies at various life stages. **Section 7.1** looks at internal migration during their growing up years. **Section 7.2** describes how education produces a culture of migration to specific destination countries, with particular focus on pathways to Singapore and the UK. It cross-cuts **Sections 4.3.2** and **5.1.3** and discusses how this culture of migration is interlinked with a general preference for overseas education, as well as *Bumiputera*-differentiated access to Malaysian public universities. **Section 7.3** describes the post-graduation phase as individuals stay on in their education migration destinations, or make further migration moves. Finally, **Section 7.4** concludes this chapter.

Before I elaborate on the migration geographies, it is worthwhile to provide an overview of the demographic and social stratification profiles amongst my respondents. Gender representations are more-or-less balanced for respondents in Singapore and Malaysia (**Figure 7.1A**). However, there were significantly more female respondents for the London/UK group (81%); and more male respondents in the 'global' group (83%). Although gender is not a specific theme I examine in this thesis, it is important to bear in mind that it could constitute a secondary explanatory factor.

In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents in Singapore, London/UK and 'global' groups are single, while returnees to Malaysia are mostly married (**Figure 7.1B**). In terms of citizenship, only six out of 66 respondents (excluding **M10** who holds a Malaysian red I/C) have relinquished their Malaysian citizenship (**Figure 7.1C**). A popular strategy is to retain Malaysian citizenship while taking up permanent resident status of either the residential country or a third country. The overall average age is between 30-35 years, although returnees to Malaysia are on average in their late-30s and early-40s (**Figure 7.1D**).

The reasons for my respondents' first move away from Malaysia are predominantly related to education. The majority left for university, followed by pre-university (**Figure 7.1E**). Respondents in Singapore, London/UK and other global locations on average left Malaysia at

late-secondary and pre-university ages of 16, 15 and 18 respectively (**Figure 7.1F**). Returnee-respondents in Malaysia, however, on average left at a later age of 21. This means that the latter group would have gained longer living experience in Malaysia before migrating.

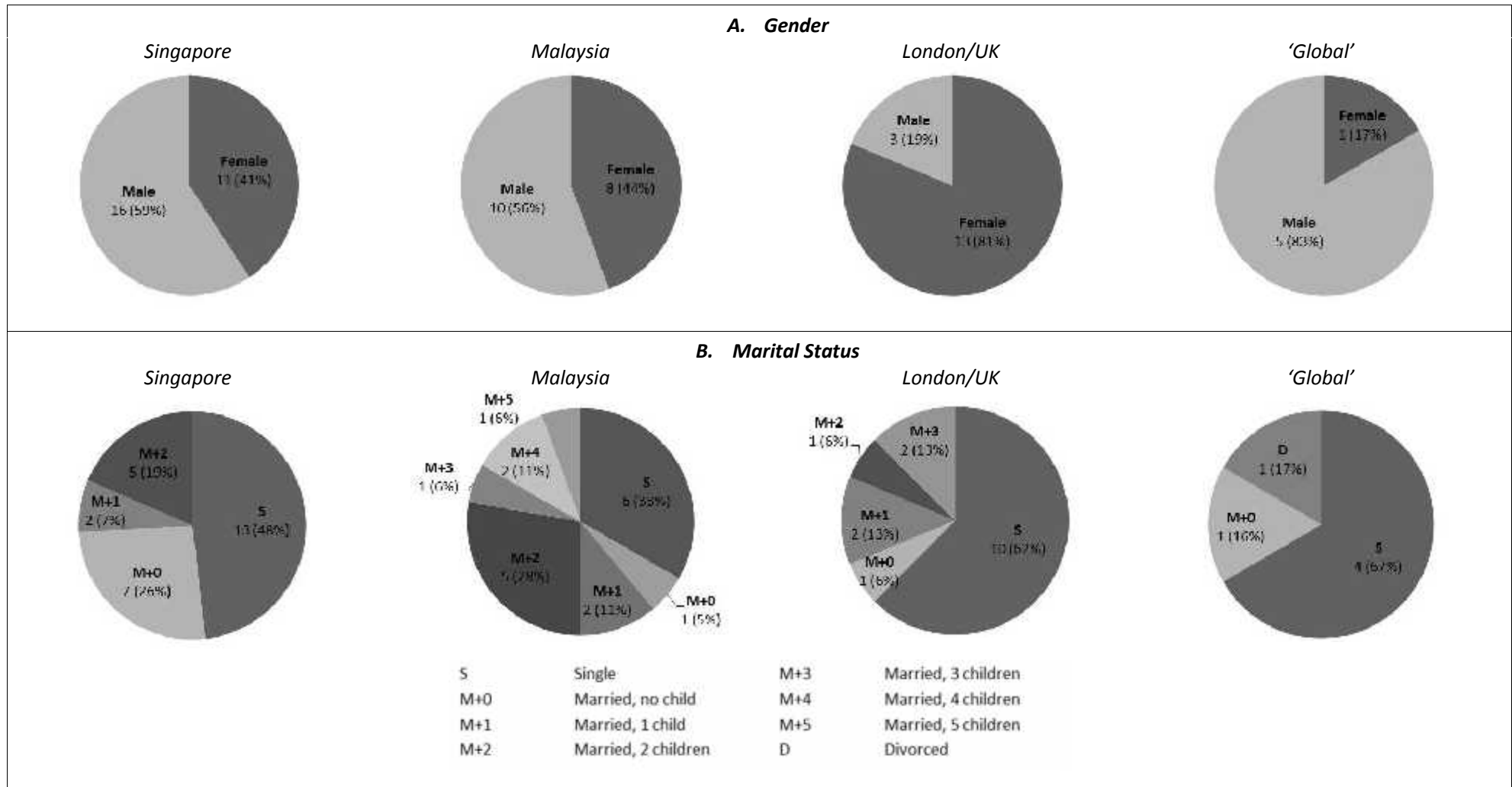
As I will show in **Chapter 8**, this appears to be correlated to the returnees' stronger affiliation to "Malaysia" and their actualised acts of return, compared to non-returnees' non-actualised yearnings for an eventual return set in the future. This, however, must also be contextualised within the strategies adopted by individuals and their families to ensure access to higher education. Since these strategies could extend to the primary school stage, this means that *Bumiputera*-differentiated education – a British colonial legacy exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state – necessarily predetermines mobile Malaysians' migration geographies. This includes their relative propensity to return, or to continue their transnational migration pathways.

**Figures 7.1G-7.1I** summarise the reasons for moving to the current location, future migration plans, and participation in Malaysian electoral voting respectively. The majority of respondents currently resident in Singapore moved there for postgraduate employment, followed by education purposes such as taking up ASEAN scholarships at secondary school stage and pursuing their university studies. This group appears to be most settled in the Malaysia-Singapore region: 44.4% intend to remain in Singapore, and 22.2% intend to return to Malaysia. This is also evident in their individual migration geographies: the majority had resided for a substantial number of years in Singapore either as students or professionals (**Figure 7.2A**). Despite the geographical proximity to Malaysia, 37% of this group had not registered for electoral voting in Malaysia (**Figure 7.1I**).

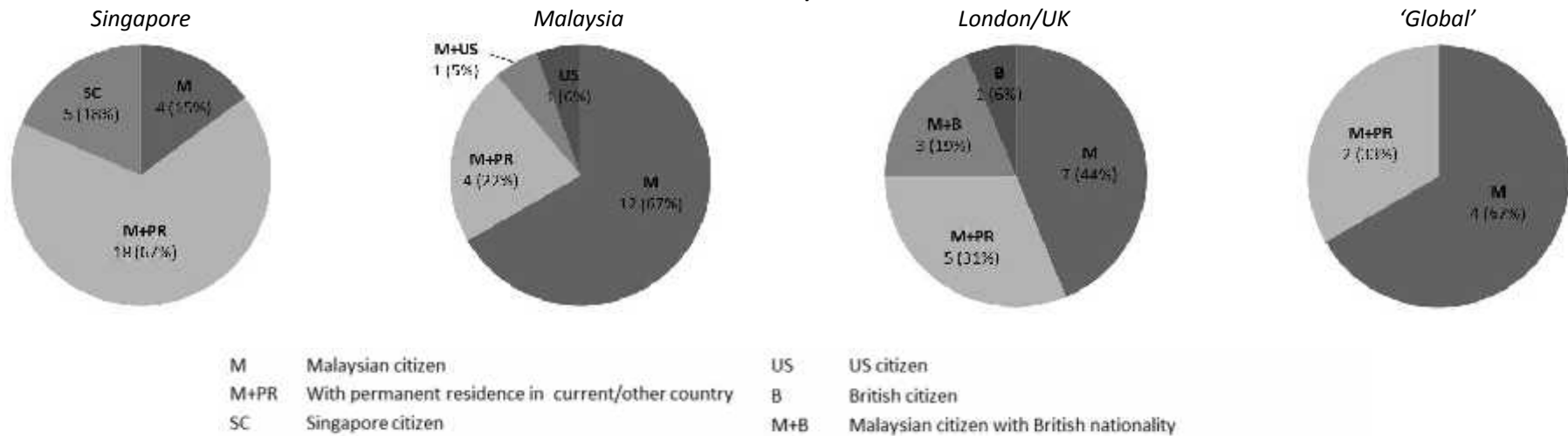
The majority of respondents currently resident in London/UK moved there for university education. This includes twinning arrangements with private colleges in Malaysia. Interestingly, 31.3% in this group indicated that they are unsure about their next migration path, and 25% indicated that they chose to reside in the UK for the time-being, with a view to further migration. There were also some who had moved internally within the UK (**Figure 7.2C**). Amongst this group, 68.8% had not registered as electoral voters. Amongst those who have registered, 50% have not voted (**Figure 7.1I**).



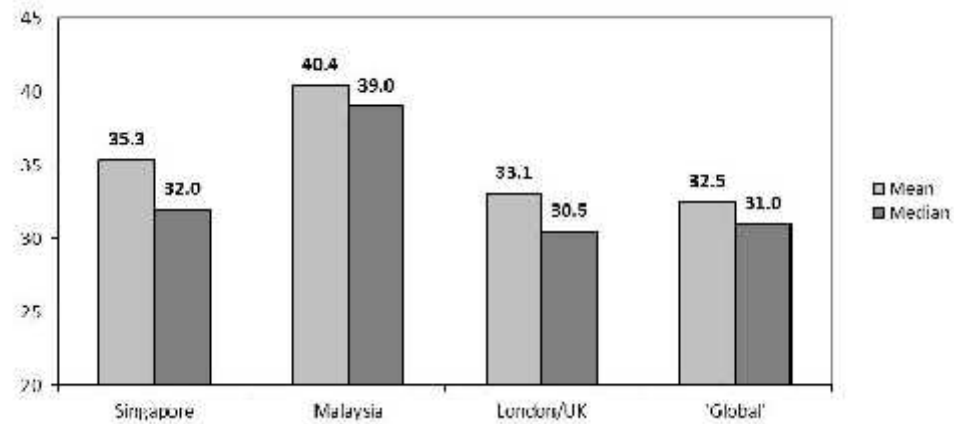
Figure 7.1: Respondents' Demographic and Social Stratification Profiles



### C. Citizenship and PR Status



### D. Age (in 2011)



### E. Reason for First Move from Malaysia

#### Singapore

Reason	n	%
Born in Singapore	2	7.4%
Follow family	1	3.7%
Daily commute	2	7.4%
Secondary school	1	3.7%
<b>Pre-University</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14.8%</b>
<b>University</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>44.4%</b>
Further education	1	3.7%
Postgraduate employment	2	7.4%
Follow partner/spouse	2	7.4%

#### Malaysia

Reason	n	%
Secondary school	1	5.6%
Pre-University	1	5.6%
University (Twinning)	3	16.7%
<b>University</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
<b>Further education/training</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
Follow partner	1	5.6%

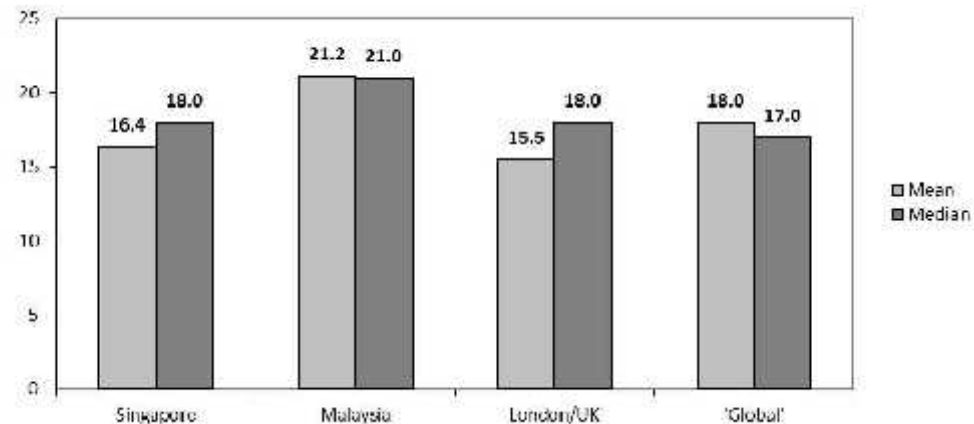
#### London/UK

Reason	n	%
Born in the UK	2	12.5%
Secondary school	2	12.5%
Follow family	1	6.3%
<b>Pre-University</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25.0%</b>
<b>University</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31.3%</b>
Further education	1	6.3%
Overseas experience	1	6.3%

#### 'Global'

Reason	n	%
Secondary school	1	16.7%
Pre-University	1	16.7%
<b>University</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
Further studies	1	16.7%
Employment	1	16.7%

### F. Age at First Move from Malaysia



### G. Reason for Moving to Current Location

#### Singapore

Reason	n	%
Born in Singapore	1	3.7%
Kindergarten	1	3.7%
Commuting	3	11.1%
<b>ASEAN Scholarship</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14.8%</b>
Pre-university	2	7.4%
<b>University</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14.8%</b>
Postgraduate studies	2	7.4%
Follow spouse	3	11.1%
<b>Postgraduate employment</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25.9%</b>

#### Malaysia

Reason	n	%
Career prospects	4	22.2%
Family reasons	6	33.3%
<b>Career + family</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38.9%</b>
Retirement	1	5.6%

#### London/UK

Reason	n	%
Pre-university	1	6.3%
<b>University</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>43.8%</b>
Further studies	1	6.3%
Professional training	1	6.3%
Employment	4	25.0%
Company assignment	1	6.3%
Family	1	6.3%

#### 'Global'

Reason	n	%
Better salary	1	16.7%
<b>Gain overseas experience</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
Company assignment	2	33.3%

### H. Future Migration Plans

#### Singapore

Plans	n	%
Australia	2	7.4%
<b>Remain in Singapore</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>44.4%</b>
Singapore for now	2	7.4%
Commute Singapore/UK	1	3.7%
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
Explore somewhere else	1	3.7%
Unsure	3	11.1%

#### Malaysia

Plans	n	%
Australia or Singapore	2	11.1%
USA	2	11.1%
UK	1	5.6%
Malaysia for now	2	11.1%
<b>Remain in Malaysia</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>55.6%</b>
Malaysia or Singapore	1	5.6%

#### London/UK

Plans	n	%
UK	2	12.5%
<b>UK for now</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25.0%</b>
Europe	1	6.3%
Malaysia	1	6.3%
UK or Malaysia	1	6.3%
Anywhere	2	12.5%
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31.3%</b>

#### 'Global'

Plans	n	%
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
Malaysia or Singapore	1	16.7%
Europe	1	16.7%
Unsure	1	16.7%

### I. Participation in Malaysian Electoral Voting

#### Singapore

Electoral voting	n	%
Registered, voted	8	29.6%
Registered, not voted	3	11.1%
Registered, voting unknown	2	7.4%
<b>Not registered</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>37.0%</b>
Unknown	2	7.4%
Not applicable	2	7.4%

#### Malaysia

Electoral voting	n	%
<b>Registered, voted</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
Registered, not voted	4	22.2%
<b>Not registered</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
Unknown	2	11.1%
Not applicable	1	5.6%

#### London/UK

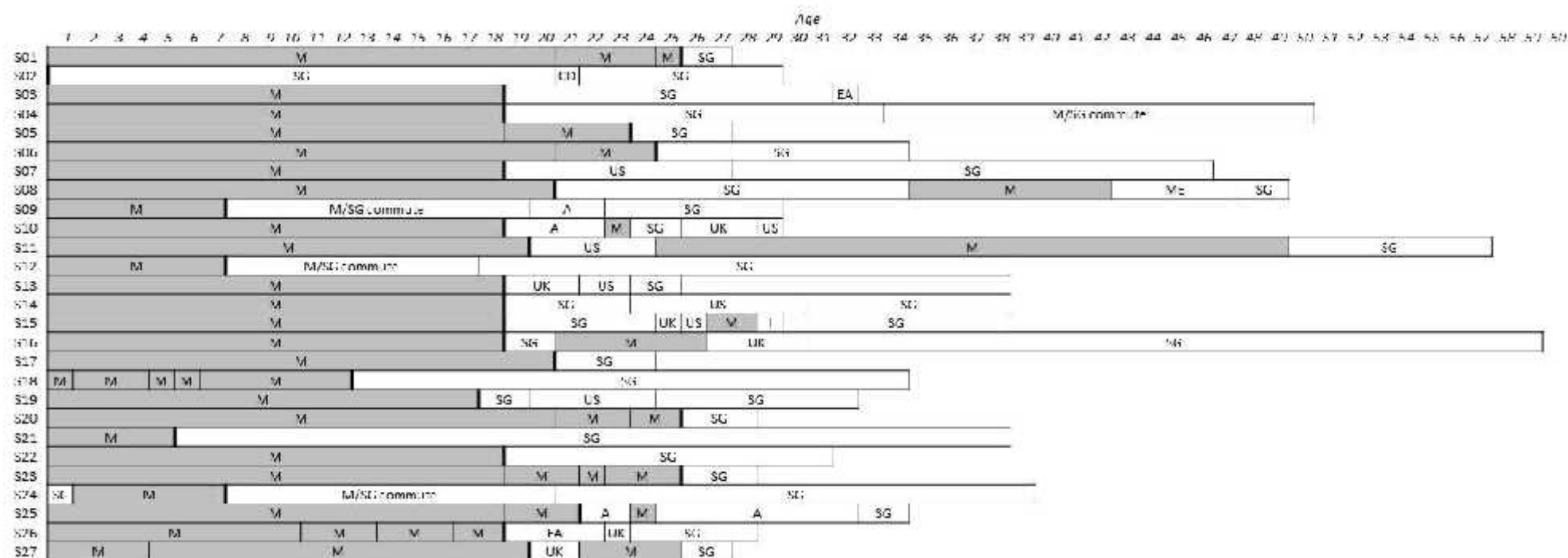
Electoral voting	n	%
Registered, voted	2	12.5%
Registered, not voted	2	12.5%
<b>Not registered</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>68.8%</b>
Not applicable	1	6.3%

#### 'Global'

Electoral voting	n	%
<b>Registered, voted</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
Registered, not voted	2	33.3%
Unknown	1	16.7%

Source: Author

**Figure 7.2: Respondents' Migration Geographies**  
**A. Singapore-based Respondents**



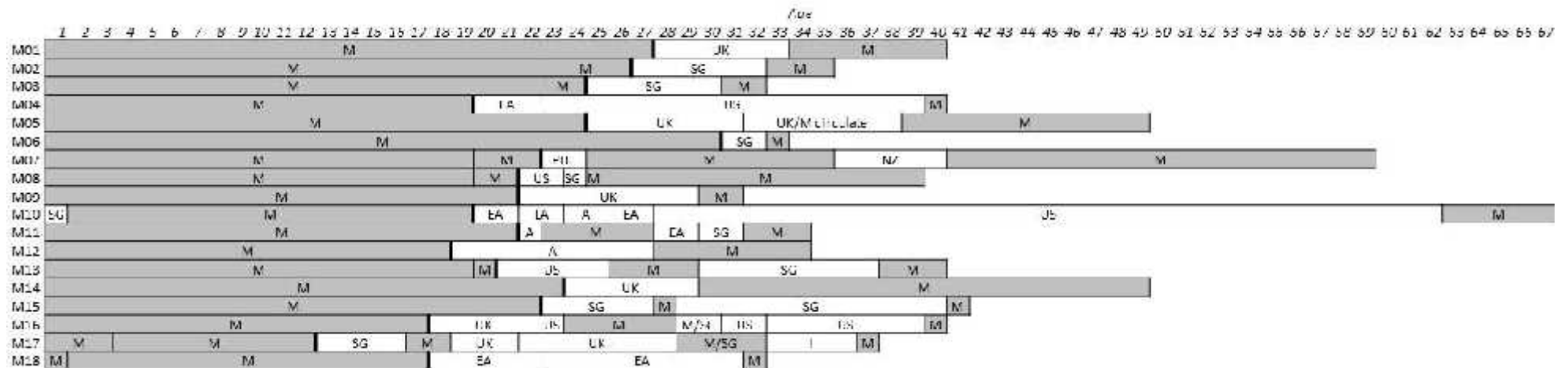
**Legend**

A Australia  
CD Canada  
EA East Asian country  
EU European country  
I Indonesia

LA Latin American country  
M Malaysia  
ME Middle East country  
PH Philippines  
SG Singapore

TH Thailand  
UK United Kingdom  
US United States of America  
M First point of leaving Malaysia

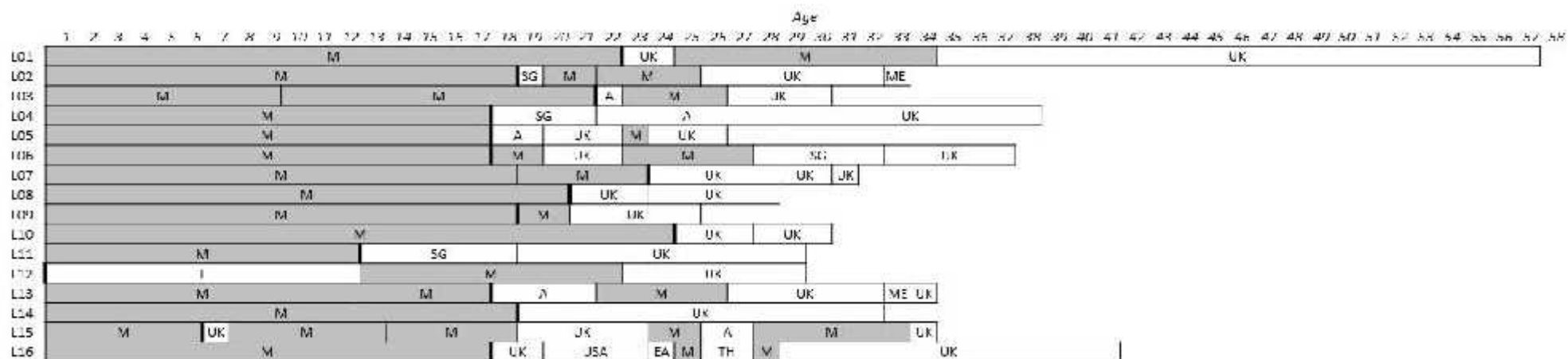
## B. Malaysia-based Respondents



### Legend

A	Australia	LA	Latin American country	TH	Thailand
CD	Canada	M	Malaysia	UK	United Kingdom
EA	East Asian country	ME	Middle East country	US	United States of America
EU	European country	PH	Philippines	M	First point of leaving Malaysia
I	Indonesia	SG	Singapore		

### C. London/UK-based Respondents



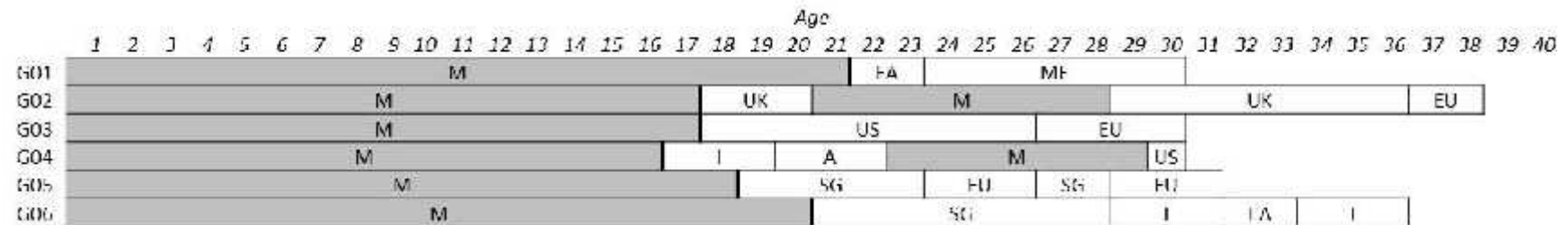
### Legend

A	Australia
CD	Canada
EA	East Asian country
EU	European country
I	Indonesia

LA Latin American country  
M Malaysia  
ME Middle East country  
PH Philippines  
SG Singapore

TH Thailand  
UK United Kingdom  
US United States of America  
**M** First point of leaving Malaysia

#### D. 'Global'-based Respondents



##### Legend

A Australia  
 CD Canada  
 EA East Asian country  
 EU European country  
 I Indonesia

LA Latin American country  
 M Malaysia  
 ME Middle East country  
 PH Philippines  
 SG Singapore

TH Thailand  
 UK United Kingdom  
 US United States of America  
 M First point of leaving Malaysia

Source: Author



Those who are currently residing in other global cities moved there to gain overseas work experience. However, this does not mean that their current migration is the only international mobility they had undertaken (**Figure 7.2D**). For example, **G02** and **G04** had left Malaysia for education, returned for seven to eight years, and left for a second time. Furthermore, four out of six respondents indicated that their long-term migration destination would be within the Malaysia-Singapore region. This is understandable by looking at **G05's** and **G06's** migration geographies: both initially left Malaysia for education in Singapore, and have since been circulating in the Singapore-Europe and Singapore-Indonesia-East Asia routes respectively. Out of the six respondents, 50% have participated in electoral voting before while they were living in Malaysia and/or Singapore (**Figure 7.1I**).

Respondents currently resident in Malaysia moved back for both career and family considerations. However, this does not mean that their return is permanent, as some have concrete plans for further migration. Furthermore, many had been circulating back-and-forth between Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the UK and the US (**Figure 7.2B**). Out of the 18 respondents, 27.8% had not registered as electoral voters. Amongst the ten who have registered, four had not voted (**Figure 7.1I**).

It is important to note that the 67 respondents are not representative of *all* contemporary mobile Malaysians. As I will show in the following sections, their migration geographies are a combination of planned and unplanned life decisions. What is significant is that these migration geographies can be understood as a culture of migration in Malaysia, which I argue can be traced back to British colonial legacies.

## **7.1 Growing-up and Moving Around**

### **7.1.1 Migration is Normal**

In this section, I examine three typical migration trajectories experienced by some of my respondents. Firstly, for those who were born in Malaysia, I trace how they followed their parents' migration trajectories (including employment, further education, relying on extended family in caring for young children). Secondly, for those who were either born in, or grew up in Singapore, I look at the significance of regular visits to their parental hometowns in Malaysia. Thirdly, for those who were born in the UK, I look at how they and their parents made temporary and permanent movements to Malaysia.

I also discuss how and why the normalcy of migration – moving around in general, and migrating for education in particular – comes about and influences mobile Malaysians' migration geographies. While long-term internal migration may not have been part of all my respondents' growing-up years, most have engaged in short-term migration and/or repeated visits to their parents' hometowns and relatives' homes. In addition, migration has been part of their family histories, particularly in their parents' generation. Their parents would have been in their early-20s to early-40s in the 1970s when the post-colonial Malaysian state introduced changes to the education system and implemented affirmative action policies. Thus, their education migration strategies would have been significantly influenced by their parents' generation set in the socio-political context of post-colonial Malaysia.

### **Born in Malaysia**

**S18** was born in KL. She and her sibling were sent as infants to live with their grandmother in Penang while her parents lived and worked in KL. When she was about five years old, the family moved to Pontian,<sup>80</sup> following her father's job transfer. They continued to move around within the Johor state following her father's job transfers. By the time she started primary school, the family had moved to Kota Bharu (KB).<sup>81</sup> As she articulates her experience:

Mostly all this travelling is because of my parents' job *lah*.<sup>82</sup> ... my dad [works in the] public sector then he gets transferred to wherever the government wants him to.

Although her family lived far away from her parents' hometowns (Penang and Kedah respectively), frequent visits were made during school holidays ("we don't see [my grandma or my cousins or my granddad] very often but ... we will go all the way to [visit] them").

Similarly, **L10's** narration of his family's migratory movements demonstrates how circulatory mobility is undertaken to suit life circumstances:

I was born in Penang but I was raised in PJ.<sup>83</sup> Because my parents are from Penang. ... When my dad graduated from [university] he got a job in KL. So my mum followed him down and my mum got pregnant with my oldest sister. ... at that time there was no one who could take care of my mum when she was pregnant, because we have no family members in KL. So my mum had to go back to Penang.

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<sup>80</sup> A town in southwest Johor, about 60 kilometres from JB.

<sup>81</sup> Capital city of Kelantan.

<sup>82</sup> "*Lah*" is a Malaysian/Singaporean colloquial slang commonly used in conversations. The term has no meaning on its own, and is often used to emphasise the sentence/word before.

<sup>83</sup> Petaling Jaya, a large city in Selangor, about 11 kilometres west of KL.

**L10**'s father had migrated for work, while his mother migrated for marriage. His mother then returned to her hometown to access her own family's help in caring for two young children. **L10**'s family subsequently resided in PJ.

**L12** was born in Penang, her mother's hometown. Her family moved to Indonesia, following her father's job transfer. **L12** spent her first twelve years in various cities in Indonesia ("My dad moved every few years because he was working. So every two, three years we are in a different city"). The family then returned to Malaysia and lived in KL. **L12** spent her teenage years in KL, and continues to think fondly of this time.

**M17** was born in Muar.<sup>84</sup> When he was three years old, his family moved to KL, where he spent his growing up years. Although the family resided in KL, his father ran factories in Batu Pahat<sup>85</sup> and Taiping.<sup>86</sup> Growing up, he would spend his school holidays in these towns. His relatives live in Muar and Kluang,<sup>87</sup> and the family would pay visits during holidays. **M17**'s growing up years in Malaysia, as well as his return to Malaysia for pre-university education after four years in Singapore have been significant in shaping his identification with the Malaysian way of life. As he describes his first return:

I became human once again. Mixing with the easygoing Malaysians that had gone through the [Malaysian education] system, I started to appreciate life more beyond academic success.

**M17** also recognises that his first return had been significant in inducing his current return to Malaysia. Although he did consider relocating to Singapore as part of his "return" from the UK, he realised that Malaysia offers a more attractive option than Singapore.

I would not have returned to KL for the second time if I had not done the first stint. I know what I am getting myself into now. Whereas the laid back attitude of KL was stifling when I was 30 years old, now it is extremely liberating as a 36 year old that has a kid, varied interest outside work, more experience and more capital.

...

I was actually looking to move to Singapore. Thankfully all the options there did not work out. Cost of living there is astronomical, labour market depressed and competition intense. Life in Singapore is now a real grind, and no longer the escape it used to be.

Although **M17** had not explicitly linked his return decision to his growing up and pre-university experiences in Malaysia, it is evident that he thinks reflexively about what KL and Singapore

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<sup>84</sup> Large town in northwestern Johor, about 145 kilometres from JB.

<sup>85</sup> Large town in northwestern Johor, about 100 kilometres from JB.

<sup>86</sup> Second largest town in Perak.

<sup>87</sup> Town in north Johor, about 110 kilometres from JB.

can offer him at different stages of his life. KL's "laid back attitude" had been a factor that made him "[become] human once again" in his pre-university years. While this "laid back attitude" was not to his liking in his early career years, it is now an attractive way of life befitting his mid-career years.

### **Born or Grew Up in Singapore**

**S02** and **S24** were born in Singapore as their parents moved to Singapore in the 1970s and became SPRs. **S02**'s parents made the move to Singapore as part of his grandfather's family business plan. Although **S02** lived permanently in Singapore, his parents would bring him to visit his grandparents and relatives in their hometown twice a year. **S24**'s parents were originally from JB. He was born in Singapore during the period when they resided in Singapore. Subsequently, the family returned to live in JB. The family's return appears to coincide with the return of many Chinese-Malaysian professional emigrants during the 1980s, "when economic growth and the [Malaysian] state's liberalisation of education and cultural policies" eased non-*Bumiputera* access to higher education (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2001, p. 61). **S24** resided and "grew up" in Malaysia but commuted daily to attend school in Singapore.

**S21** was born in Labis.<sup>88</sup> When he was three years old, his mother brought him and three siblings to live in Singapore, while his father remained in Malaysia with four elder siblings. **S21**'s father was a businessman and had lived in Kelantan for a while. When **S21** was in secondary school, his mother returned to Malaysia to attend to his father's health, leaving **S21** and his elder siblings in Singapore. As a child, **S21** would make three annual stay-visits to his hometown: during Chinese New Year, mid-year school holidays, and end-of-year school holidays. As each school holiday would last for one to two months, this meant that he spent about a quarter of a year in Malaysia. Having half the family in Malaysia and half in Singapore also meant that **S21** continued to be connected to Malaysia despite "growing up" in Singapore.

### **Born in the UK**

**L14**'s parents came to the UK in the 1970s to pursue their university degrees. Her eldest sister was born in JB because her mother "happened to be at home" then. After her parents graduated from university, they stayed on in the UK and worked for a year. During this time, **L14** was born and automatically acquired British citizenship. Children born in the UK before 1 January 1983 were automatically British citizens regardless of the immigration status of their

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<sup>88</sup> Small town in northern Johor, about 130 kilometres from JB.

parents, unless at the time of birth the father was a diplomat or consul (UKBA, 2011). Subsequently, **L14**'s parents decided to return to Malaysia as they felt that with family support, Malaysia was a better place to bring up their children. The family moved to KL, where **L14** spent her growing up years. Her parents continued to live in KL until today, while **L14** returned to the UK for university in the late-1990s.

Similarly, **L15**'s father came to the UK to pursue his university degree. **L15** was born in the UK and acquired British citizenship in the same manner as **L14**. As **L15** was the first grandchild of the family, her grandmother wanted to bring her up in Malaysia. When she was less than a month old, her grandmother came to the UK and brought her back to Malaysia. **L15**'s childhood years involved international and internal migration, shuttling between her parents, her grandmother, and her extended family:

I was staying with my grandmother in Alor Setar<sup>89</sup> first. And then during my primary school I stayed with my aunty as well, [in] Sungai Petani<sup>90</sup> a bit. And then one year with my other aunty in Langkawi<sup>91</sup> (laughs), when I was in Standard Two. So I've been like all over I guess (laughs), living with different aunties and also my grandmother.

When she was six years old, she returned to the UK to join her parents for a year. She then returned to Malaysia for her primary education. Her subsequent moves involved further back-and-forth shuttling:

Somehow I spent Standard One back in Malaysia. ... Standard One [to] Standard Six. .... Then after that I joined my mum here [in the UK]. And my dad went back. .... And then I got an offer for a residential school<sup>92</sup> [in Malaysia] for Form One. So I went back (laughs). I went back for five years, until after SPM. And after SPM I joined my mum back here in the UK.

### **7.1.2 Migration Mentality**

Although my respondents' family histories are intimately linked to migration, it is interesting that none of them – except **L16** – voluntarily identified the commonality of migration behaviours and practices within their families and social networks. More importantly, as I argue in this thesis, this socialised habitus affects their subsequent migrating lives. Migration has become an accepted norm for my mobile Malaysian respondents. They often cannot articulate the reasons for pursuing overseas education, or why they went through certain education streams and not others.

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<sup>89</sup> Capital city of Kedah.

<sup>90</sup> Large town in Kedah, about 55 kilometres south of Alor Setar.

<sup>91</sup> Island in Kedah, about 30 kilometres off the mainland coast of north-western Peninsular Malaysia.

<sup>92</sup> See **Section 5.1.3**.

Here, L16's narrative articulates this clearly.

You must put this in historical context also. I think Chinese in Malaysia, because we were migrants ... like for example my paternal grandfather was born in China and came to Malaysia as a 14-year old. I think if you are not ... that far away from that migration experience, I think it forms a large part of your psyche. I think a lot of Malaysian-Chinese have moved around so much that you don't realise how difficult it is.

I mean, ... you grow up with all these stories or all these ideas that: "Oh yeah, you should just bear with it. **You are going to have to go overseas to study anyway.**" As if it's going to be so easy. I only realised this when I went to the US and I met all these people who are in so much trouble, for the fact that they are separated from their parents, from their homes, from their friends. And I mean the American students who are complaining about their problems. And I thought: "Yeah, but you just moved two states away to go to university. You know, I have travelled don't know thousands of miles to come here."

With my experience it made me realise that people who grow up with so much what I call ... **migration stories, migration mentality**, ... I don't know, **culture**, that you actually forget how hard it is. And then you sort of impress upon your children that that is something that somehow they are supposed to do.

But that's also related to the way Chinese people are treated in Malaysia. Yeah, because you are also brought up with this whole idea that it's almost natural to just go overseas to study – I mean, which is also true for Malays and Indians, not just Chinese. But it's also been in-born ... it's almost as if you have to seek a better life somewhere else.

L16 articulates the internalised socialisation of the "migration mentality", pointing to two specific issues. First, the circulation of migration stories undertaken by parents and grandparents translates into the normalcy of migrating lives amongst mobile Malaysians. Second, as a result of British colonial legacies of racial stereotypes, Malay indigeneity and differentiated education systems subsequently transformed into *Bumiputera*-differentiated policies, non-*Bumiputeras* have taken it for granted that migration is inevitable and "something that somehow they are supposed to do".

### 7.1.3 Summary

As the above shows, regardless of the locations of their birthplaces, migratory movements have been common in my respondents' family lives. These mobilities include internal, international, temporary and permanent moves. Most moves happened because of their parents' education and/or job requirements (either job transfers or economic activities). Some have moved temporarily as infants to be geographically close to extended family members who provided care and support. Repeated annual visits to parental hometowns were also a big part of their growing up years. This assisted in building a strong connection to Malaysia for

those who grew up in Singapore and the UK. However, these circulatory and shuttling migratory movements were not only unique to my respondents' growing up years. In fact, they translate into migration practices during education and postgraduate stages. More importantly, this becomes a socialised "migration mentality" amongst mobile Malaysians: migration is normal, natural, and expected.

## **7.2 Migrating for Education**

### **7.2.1 Education Migration Strategies**

In **Section 7.1**, I described how mobility has been a common feature in some of my respondents' growing-up years. Closely linked to this are education migration pathways that their parents had strategised for them. Education is thus conceptualised as a means towards career and social mobility. In order to achieve this goal, charting migration moves for education began at a fairly young age. In this section, I examine four types of education migration trajectories amongst my respondents. Firstly, respondents who engaged in daily commutes from their homes in JB to Singapore as early as their primary school years; secondly, recipients of the ASEAN Scholarship at primary, secondary, and pre-university stages; thirdly, respondents who accessed private colleges and twinning programmes; and fourthly, respondents who went through the MICSS system. Finally, I examine some respondents who strategised the fastest route possible by taking advantage of differing start dates and durations of education programmes in different countries.

Because migrating for education has been a significant first step leading to subsequent migration and settlement, it is also important to look at the experiences of education. I examine three examples of education experiences which emerged from the interview-conversations: first, why university education is prioritised and preferred; second, reflections of *Bumiputera*-Malays who went through the prestigious Malay residential schools; and third, non-*Bumiputera* government scholars. I argue that these education experiences reinforce social realities inherited as colonial legacies – hence demonstrating the longevity of colonial legacies.

#### **JB-Singapore Commuters**

In **Section 6.2.1**, I described how the daily commute over the Singapore-Malaysia causeway is common amongst Malaysians residing in JB. In this section, I look at the typical cases of **S09**,

**S12** and **S24**, who were daily commuters throughout their schooling years in Singapore. School children who performed such daily commutes would typically leave their JB homes as early as 5am on school buses, catch some sleep during the two-hour journey to their schools in Singapore, and return to their JB homes after 8 or 9pm at the end of every day.

One might wonder why parents would subject their young children to such harsh commuting. In addition to geographical proximity, the Singapore education system is favourably perceived as superior compared to the Malaysian education system. The use of English as a teaching medium in Singapore as opposed to Malay in Malaysia is preferred by middle-class parents. This is because English is seen as an important international language skill for their children's future careers. This could also be a cultural legacy amongst the Chinese ethnic groups. Takei, Bock and Saunders (1973, pp. 7-8) suggest that the Chinese are more willing "to exploit opportunities to utilize English-language education as a means of obtaining positions in the modernizing sectors of the society".

However, I argue that this could also be understood as effects of colonial legacies. As I have explained in **Section 4.3.2**, English medium schools have been prioritised by the British colonial administration, and institutionalised as a stepping stone towards prestigious civil service jobs. Furthermore, following the implementation of affirmative action policies from 1970, parents would have been aware of the limited opportunities for their non-*Bumiputera* children to access public university places and scholarships. This meant that they had to plan early to ensure their children's higher education pathways in the future.

For JB parents, then, the daily commute to Singapore is a convenient and feasible solution. Earlier entry into the Singapore education system prepares children to excel academically for entry into overseas universities at a later stage. Furthermore, Malaysian upper secondary and pre-university qualifications, the SPM and STPM respectively, were perceived to be less useful in gaining admissions into overseas universities than Singapore's GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels.

**S12's** narration captures the commonality of such practices amongst Johor residents:

My parents used to work in the educational field, so they know that in terms of equality, in terms of education, we will get a better grasp of English which they think it's important, in Singapore. ... From the age of seven we have been crossing the causeway to study in Singapore. So that starts my relationship and my sister's relationship [with] Singapore. We study through primary school, secondary school, and through college, through university.



Similarly, **S09** started commuting to Singapore at age seven for her primary education. She continued these daily commutes through her secondary and pre-university years. Her two siblings also did the same. With her GCE 'A' Levels, **S09** then went to an Australian university. **S24**, whom I have briefly introduced in **Section 7.1.1**, was born in Singapore but commuted daily to Singapore as his family returned to JB after his birth. He completed his pre-university education in Singapore, and also went to an Australian university. Both **S09** and **S24** eventually returned to Singapore for postgraduate employment.

### **ASEAN Scholars**

In **Section 6.3.2**, I described how the Singapore government started offering ASEAN Scholarships for pre-university education in Singapore in 1969. The Scholarship has since been extended to lower and upper secondary levels, thus recruiting students into Singapore when they are between twelve and sixteen years old.<sup>93</sup> **S18** received the Secondary One ASEAN Scholarship; **L04** the Secondary Three ASEAN Scholarship; and **S19** the Pre-university ASEAN Scholarship. While it is typical for students on these scholarships to continue their university education in Singapore, as in the case of **S18**, this was not the case for **L04** and **S19**.

**S18** came to Singapore for her secondary school education. Her sibling also did the same, although not on an ASEAN Scholarship. Their parents eventually relocated to JB to be geographically closer to them. **S18**'s application for the ASEAN Scholarship was part of her parents' plans for her education. As she explains:

During primary school, my parents already knew that they wanted me to try for [the ASEAN] scholarship. ... [I] eventually got the scholarship and that's why we came. ... So that was the start.

Hence, the Secondary One ASEAN Scholarship "was the start" of **S18**'s long stay in Singapore. After completing her GCE 'O' Levels, she received the ASEAN Pre-university Scholarship to continue her pre-university education in a Singapore junior college. She then entered a Singapore university. After graduation, she continued to work in Singapore. She married a Singaporean husband whom she met at university. At the time of our interview conversation, she holds a Dependent SPR through her marriage.

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<sup>93</sup> The number of ASEAN Scholarships awarded annually has increased from about 20 in the 1970s to about 800-1,000 in the 2000s (see Tan, 2013).

**L04** came to Singapore after her SRP examinations. After completing her GCE 'O' Levels, she received the Pre-University ASEAN Scholarship for her GCE 'A' Levels. Thereafter, she managed to obtain a Malaysian government scholarship for her university education in Australia. She rationalises this as “purely by luck” and “being in the right time, right place”, as this happened during the period when *Bumiputera*-students were prioritised for Malaysian government scholarships. **L04** credits her ASEAN Scholarship days for this, as she “obviously proved an impeccable record” in her Singapore academic studies. In this case, the ASEAN Scholarship became a stepping stone for her further education migration pathways.

**S19's** decision to take up the Pre-University ASEAN Scholarship was one of careful calculations. He had wanted to pursue overseas university education in Australia or the US. The Scholarship offered him a two-year “wait out” period during the 1997 economic crisis, as well as a stepping stone to another scholarship for his overseas education.

That time '97 was the economic crisis, so it was really a toss-up between going abroad immediately after SPM or coming back to Singapore for the ASEAN Scholarship. It sounded like a lot of money to me back then to just go direct *lah*, to either America or Australia. So I thought maybe come to Singapore and do two years of 'A' Levels. Wait it out and see what happens. ... it eventually turns out in 2000 I got a scholarship to go to America. I wanted to study overseas, so that was that. And because of the scholarship I came back [to Singapore].

By being in the Singapore education system, **S19** was able to accumulate the relevant educational capital that enabled him to compete on a meritocratic basis for his second scholarship. If he had stayed on in the Malaysia public school system, he would have faced limited scholarship opportunities as a non-*Bumiputera*. His second scholarship, offered by a Singapore company, required him to return to Singapore for six years of postgraduate employment. Thus, although he did “migrate” onwards for higher education, he eventually “returned” to Singapore for employment. He married a Singaporean wife whom he met during his US university years. At the time of interview, he holds SPR and has purchased a home in Singapore.

### **Twinning Programmes**

In **Section 6.3.2**, I explained the availability of private twinning programmes in Malaysia where students would engage in transnational education arrangements. Under such programmes, students typically start their course in the Malaysian partner private colleges and institutes and complete their final year in the degree-conferring overseas university. Amongst my respondents, it is interesting that none of those residing in Singapore took this route. Instead,

some of those who are residing in London/UK went through this route. Here, I elaborate **L03's** and **L07's** experiences.

**L03** was born in Penang but grew up in KL. After completing SPM, she enrolled in a twinning programme in a private college in KL. She spent the first three years – a Foundation year and the first two years of her degree – in the KL college, and her final year in Australia. When I asked her if she ever considered going to a Malaysian public university, her answer demonstrate the taken-for-granted nature of going for the twinning option:

I don't think it was an option to us ... Well, it was an option, you [could] always have done that. I just think the way my parents geared us up was to go and do A-Levels or Foundation Year, or something of that sort, as opposed to you going to [Malaysian] universities. It was very much the ... it's an upbringing. So we never really considered. It was like "Oh, if you don't have money then you would have to do that."

**L07** was born in JB and moved to KL after his SPM. He completed a one-year South Australian Matriculation (SAM) programme at a private college in KL. Upon graduation, he enrolled in a twinning programme through a Malaysian private university. After the first two years of his degree in the Malaysia campus, he moved to the UK to complete his degree at a partner overseas university. Similarly, **L07** could not really explain why he had not considered studying in a Malaysian public university.

Oh, public university? Um ... I did (hesitantly). But my parents were not very keen. Because of the ... because the level of education, the level of standards. And because my mum is a [healthcare professional], and my dad works in an international company. So they deal with all sorts of people like local graduates, overseas graduates. And they often tell me, in their opinion, because they have seen how local graduates perform in their company, in their sector. I think their impression is the standard is not as high as those graduated from [overseas]. So I think because of that, they want me to go overseas instead of studying in a local university.

In addition, **L07** could not articulate his reasons for choosing the SAM over the STPM.

I did consider doing STPM. ... I was also actually considering doing 'A' Levels. .... But my parents didn't recommend me doing STPM. I don't know why. But I think from my own opinion, I probably wouldn't have done it too. Because I probably won't get a lot out of that compared to doing matriculation or 'A' Levels. Because to go into universities overseas, or even any university, you need like pretty good English to improve your language. Because when I first graduated from high school, my English was not very good, to be honest. So I think going into STPM wouldn't improve that aspect of the problem. So I went to matriculation instead.

Evident in both **L07's** explanatory attempts is the unquestioned assumption that he *should* go for an overseas education rather than attending Malaysian public universities. The overseas

education option, and hence the SAM and twinning programme, is “better” because it is perceived to offer opportunities to improve his English and accord a “higher standard” in work performance once he successfully graduates with an overseas degree. No mention, however, was made to the difficulties of gaining admission to Malaysian public universities due to the *Bumiputera* quota. This suggests that strategies to overcome structural forces in accessing higher education (in the form of *Bumiputera*-status) have been internalised into a way of life. In other words, going for overseas education became a default, at least amongst people who would eventually become mobile Malaysians.

### **MICSS Students**

In **Section 6.3.2**, I highlighted how MICSS students are obliged to seek alternative means to access tertiary education as their UEC qualifications are not recognised for Malaysian public university admissions. Amongst my MICSS respondents, there were two typical education migration strategies. The first is to migrate to Singapore, and second is to migrate to Taiwan. As **G05** remarked, “Either we go to Singapore or we go to Taiwan. Because local [universities] don’t accept us (laughs)”. **S14**, **S15** and **G05** are typical of the former strategy of going to Singapore, while **M04** and **M18** are of the latter strategy of going to Taiwan.

**S14**, **S15** and **G05** finished high school at the time when the Singapore government was actively recruiting Malaysian students and professional workers. With attractive university scholarships and tuition grants, Singapore universities became a popular option especially for MICSS students. They were able to take entrance exams to gain admission into Singapore universities. During this period, only certain subjects, particularly science and engineering, were open to foreigners. According to **S15**, the majority of his peers entered Singapore universities through the same means. In fact, 50% of his cohort is currently residing and working in Singapore.

**S14**’s response to my question on the reason why he did not consider entering public universities in Malaysia reveals the typical considerations for MICSS students. Firstly, being educated in a system that prioritised Chinese language and culture meant that his Malay language skills were not up to par for him to pursue university education in Malay. Secondly, for families without sufficient financial resources to fund their children’s overseas education in Western countries, Singapore and Taiwan became alternative solutions as the costs were more affordable. This is especially if they were able to secure scholarships offered by these universities.

Because if I study in Malaysia I would have to take STPM, right? [At least that's the case] at that time. And I only have SPM. And frankly speaking, my SPM is not outstanding, especially Malay. So it never crossed my mind. And for students studying in Chinese independent schools, if you are from humble background, either you take the scholarship to Singapore or you go to Taiwan. At that time [these were] the two major choices for me. Of course if your family is relatively well-off, then you have the chance to go to overseas such as [to] Australia or US.

But at that time studying in Malaysia never crossed my mind because ... partly because I never take STPM, and my SPM was not good. And Malay is probably one of the obstacles. ... After taking SPM, I don't think my Malay is as good as those people who study all along in *Kebangsaan* [schools].<sup>94</sup> Yeah, so it never crossed my mind.

**G05** further makes the observation that although Singapore may not be the destination for university amongst his MICSS peers, it has turned out to be a popular destination for work after graduation. Amongst his batch of about 300 students, the majority went into private colleges in Malaysia, about 50 went to Taiwan universities, and about 10 to Singapore universities. **G05** observes that many of his high school peers are currently working in Singapore: "In the end, everybody comes to Singapore and stay (laughs)."

**M04** and **M18** went to Taiwan to pursue their university degrees upon completing their UEC examinations. For **M18**, this was a natural choice as her elder brother, also a MICSS student, had done the same before. She did not consider any other locations, and instead followed the education strategy her parents had laid out for her. **M04**, on the other hand, made a conscious decision to study in Taiwan as part of his long-term migration strategy. As the eldest son with two younger siblings, he felt that it was his responsibility to pave the way for his siblings' future education and possible migration trajectory. After three years in a professional training programme in a Taiwan university, he was able to transfer credits and enrol in a US university. Upon graduation, he stayed on for work in the US and pursued his Masters on a part-time basis.

**M04's** narration offers a glimpse into his considerations.

When I left Malaysia, that was in the early-1990s. With the high school qualification, what can you do? At that time, a lot of people went to work in the factories. They pay you RM200. That was still ok, in the 1990s. But I told myself, I was only 19 or 20 years old, my life shouldn't be just like that. So I thought to myself: to get into a Taiwan university, my grades have to be good enough. But my grades were not great. But there were other possible paths. Then, I thought to myself: "Ok, I'll apply for professional training programmes first." So that's what I did.

...

I started planning for my future before I graduated in Taiwan. Malaysia will not recognise my Taiwanese qualification. So you can only work in some Taiwanese

<sup>94</sup> Lit. "national schools". See **Section 5.2.3**.

company, or a Chinese-run company in Malaysia. Also, when you graduate from Taiwan, your Malay and English are not as strong as other people. You only know Mandarin. Will you be able to survive in Malaysia? No way. So back then I was already searching around for the next possible route. I looked at how some of my seniors from high school were doing well in the US. So I contacted them to find out some information. After graduation I just continued to migrate further. It's all just following the plans.

These narratives show the structural barriers created by the exclusion of MICSS from Malaysia's mainstream education system. The exclusions are not only limited to recognition of qualifications. More significantly, the exclusions are based on two factors. First, language as medium of instruction created a division between those with good command of Malay, the national language required for public university entries and employment in certain sectors and industries. Second, the systemic division between national schools and MICSS fostered strong alumni networks amongst MICSS students. In the absence of other available resources, these alumni networks serve as important resources for information and contacts about higher education, employment and livelihoods in specific migration destinations.

### **The Fastest Route Possible**

In **Section 6.3.2**, I explained how overseas education is perceived as a desirable trajectory, as well as an indirect outcome of *Bumiputera* policies. If overseas education is the ultimate and often taken-for-granted goal, some individuals and families would go to the extent of strategising the fastest possible way to achieve that end goal. This includes migrating to selected education destinations at different stages in order to capitalise on differences in programme durations and course commencement times. **M17** and **L05**'s education migration trajectories typify such strategies.

After completing primary school in Malaysia, **M17** went to Singapore to attend secondary school. One of the reasons for doing this is to cut short his secondary school years by a year, as this would take four years in Singapore rather than five in Malaysia. After completing his GCE 'O' Levels, his parents arranged for him to return to KL to pursue GCE 'A' Levels in a private college instead of doing the same in Singapore. This was because this would take 18 months in KL, rather than two years in Singapore. This meant that he would be able to commence university in the UK by September of his GCE 'A' Levels year, instead of having to wait around for nine months for entry the following year if he had gone through the Singapore route. This is because in Singapore GCE 'A' Level results are announced in March after the examinations were taken in October and November of the preceding year. As **M17** explains:

Well, the whole thing, you know, ... parents are quite funny. They think they are doing the best for you, right? So they do certain things. So the whole purpose ... English education four years, you cut short one year already. And then after 'O' Levels, basically come back and do it in KL, you do 'A' Levels in 1.5 years. So you cut short another year rather than, you know, you finish in November and then you have to wait until September in order to go to the UK. So ... it was for the wrong reasons *lah*, basically, when we came back [to KL].

**L05** went to a public primary school in Ipoh. Her family then moved to KL, where she attended a private school offering the national curriculum. After completing Form Four, her parents sent her to Australia for Year Eleven and Year Twelve. If she had gone through the normal Malaysian public schools route, she would have had to lengthen the duration by two years for pre-university. After completing secondary school in Australia, she applied to universities in Australia and the UK. Although her first choice was UK University Y, she decided to start the programme in Australian University X first. She explains her rationale:

I actually started at [Australian University X] first. ... Because you know like how the terms there, the dates are different, right? So I basically started there first. Because [UK University Y] wasn't going to start until September anyway, so I'll start there. If I don't get into [UK University Y] or like a good university, then I wouldn't come, I would stay. So I started there for a semester. And then I already knew I got a place here [in the UK]. So then I came.

Both **M17's** and **L05's** education migration trajectories have been carefully strategised to save the total amount of time – and costs – invested in education. Reducing the duration of years in education meant an early head-start in one's career, as well as being in employment. This meant a longer time to advance in one's career development and capital accumulation as return on investments in one's overseas education. Given that these overseas educations were financed by individual families – in some cases having to consider financing more than one child – it is understandable that strategies to cut-short time spent in education were pursued were possible.

### **7.2.2 Education Experiences**

#### **Prioritising University Education**

I have argued in **Part II** that one of the British colonial legacies inherited by the post-colonial Malaysian state is institutionalisation of education as aspiration. In particular, university education and overseas Western qualifications are seen as crucial means of social mobility since these are also linked to prestigious civil service jobs. Indeed, this socialised belief has also

translated into my respondents' psyche. Here, I examine **L15's** observation of this behaviour, and **L10's** narration of his personal experiences.

**L15's** account below relates to how a relative was adamant about sending her daughter to a university and not a polytechnic.

I don't know whether it's an Asian thing or if it's a Malaysian thing. But we grew up thinking that going to university is what you have to do in order to get on with life. So we are conditioned into thinking that this is what everybody does, and this is what we should aspire to. Now that I think back, I don't think that's necessarily true.

Because I had [a relative] asking my opinion. Her daughter was not ... that interested in studying. And I knew she was interested in [vocation X]. ... So I said: "Why don't you send her to one of the polytechnics?" Because when they go to one of the technical course, they can learn a lot more hands-on stuff. And they might enjoy a lot more than just reading about theory. She thought ... (laughs) well, because if you suggest polytechnic to whoever's child, it's like you are saying he or she is not good enough to go to university.

...

Muhyiddin Yassin<sup>95</sup>, this is like two years ago, was talking about ... upgrading the polytechnics to make it attractive to students. ... And then my [relative] made a comment: "*Kenapalah Muhyiddin nak buka politeknik banyak banyak? Siapa nak pergi?*"<sup>96</sup> It's like: "Who would want to go to all the polytechnics?" To me it's a good thing. To her it's like, she's not going to send her daughter there. She wants to send her to like UiTM, or something. As long as there's a "university" in front of the name.

The preference for university education is perhaps not unique to the post-colonial Malaysian society. However, **L10's** case below demonstrates the personalised significance of pursuing overseas university education and the burden he assumed is his to bear.

Author : ... you said that your dad worked very hard to send you overseas to study, for you to have a better life. In that sense, are you thankful of ... being where you are now?

L10 : Oh yeah, definitely. You know what happened?

Author : What?

L10 : I actually made a vow to myself. If I didn't get, if I didn't get my First Class Honours right, I was just going to kill myself.

Author : Really?

L10 : Yeah. And I was so scared. Because I was thinking if I were to kill myself, who is going to take care of my parents? I was really being serious. I actually really made this vow to myself. And I remember the day before the results were out

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<sup>95</sup> Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Higher Learning since April 2009.

<sup>96</sup> My translation: "Why does Muhyiddin want to open so many polytechnics? Who would ever want to go?"



right? Couldn't sleep a wink. Because I don't know how I am going to face them. How am I going to look into their eyes when they come for my graduation? Because 2:1, the Second-Class Upper right? It wouldn't do. Because everyone is getting 2:1. So I want to stand out. I want to make sure that the money that they invested is well-invested.

...

I'm quite thankful in such a way where things were set up for me easily. Relatively easily. ... especially since my [sibling] didn't manage to go to Australia, so that portion of the money could be passed on to me. So financial-wise, in the UK at that time, even though [the exchange rate] was 1:7, I wasn't really struggling. I can actually still do without the whole year of working. But during the summer what am I going to do anyway? So yeah, the extra money is just a bonus.

And I know that I was lucky in a sense. Because I do know [of] friends who come with a very tight budget. They have to work weekly, even during the academic period. And their parents have to borrow money. So I didn't feel that burden on me. So I know subconsciously my parents are not owing anyone money. .... Yeah, so financial-wise it's not so much. It's more of the grades that I need to get, to show them that yes, it's money well-used.

**L10's** narrative shows that overseas education is valued greatly. That is why parents strategise their children's education migration, sometimes getting into financial debt. The result is that students such as **L10** go into overseas education with an immense sense of gratitude, duty and obligation. An upper-second grade is not good enough to repay his parents' investments for his education. To repay that financial burden, it is no surprise that student-migrants stay on in their overseas locations to capitalise on better salaries and the currency exchange rate.

### **Segregation by Education Streams**

Both **L13** and **L15** went to Malay residential secondary schools. As I explained in **Section 5.1.3**, these schools were restricted to *Bumiputera*-Malays. As entries are competitive, a sense of prestige is attached to graduates from these schools. Similar to how the MCKK enabled a direct link to postgraduate civil service positions, graduates from Malay residential schools often end up securing government scholarships for overseas education. **L15** makes the following observation of her peers, which also led to her reflection on the segregated nature of Malaysia's education streams.

And they are all like doctors and paediatricians and specialists. And I'm sure they are all JPA scholars. ... Some of them are my batch mates, like from my residential school. Some of my juniors. When they blog they have like someone's child's birthday, and they have it in a castle somewhere. Here it's very expensive (laughs). I mean like all the nice clothes and the decorations, the food. Nice life.

And ... well, some of them, they are just there, probably just to stay. Because they bought property in Malaysia. So they are coming back [to Malaysia] at the end of the day, like when they retire. These are mostly Malays. I don't know any Chinese.

The strange thing is, the only Chinese friends that I know of are Singaporeans. The ones that I made friends with during my undergraduate days. Because I went to a *Sekolah Kebangsaan*. And then I went to a convent, so there were a lot more other races. But I went to a residential school, it was 100% Malay. Not even *Bumi* [i.e. *Bumiputera*]. Obviously Malays are *Bumis*. Because *Bumi* is ... you still have like Christian. Not just Malay, or Muslim. And when I went to university, then only I had Indian friends. The Indian friend is from Kenya (laughs). So when I think about it, it's quite strange (laughs).

And even in [Malaysian] universities, I can see there is polarisation. Like the Chinese with the Chinese during group work. Or like socialising. Malays are with the Malays, Indians are with the Indians. It's the culture, it's not because ... I like to think that it's not because you want to segregate yourself. The language, the culture, and the things you talk about is different. That's why you don't really ... You really have to make an effort to make friends with each other. It's not exactly the fact that you don't want to be friends (laughs).

**L15's** observation points out two issues in relation to the longevity of colonial legacies and Malaysia's culture of migration. First, race-based segregation institutionalised in different education streams in the primary school level has been carried into the later education stages. This means that the post-colonial Malaysian state's efforts to consolidate a common national education system from the secondary school stage onwards have not been successful in removing ethnic segregation. Second, although *Bumiputera* residential schools were supposed to be open to all *Bumiputeras* (i.e. not just *Bumiputera*-Malays), this has not been the case, at least from **L15's** personal experience. Furthermore, the continued prioritisation of *Bumiputera*-Malay education has created a group of *Bumiputera*-Malay government scholars who have attained social mobility – much like the creation of the Malay political, bureaucratic and education elite class during the colonial era.

### **Non-Bumiputera Government Scholars**

**L06** was a non-*Bumiputera* government scholar. As the scholarship covered pre-university studies, she moved to KL for 'A' Levels before completing her university degree in the UK. Her pre-university and university experiences as a non-*Bumiputera* government scholar significantly inform her migration decisions. As she explains:

I think there is still quite a discrimination ... the Chinese [scholars] are allowed to do three years university degrees abroad if you get straight 'A's. But if you are Malay, you can get lousy scores, like all 'C's. I scored all 'A's and they scored all 'C's and we all ended up in the same place.

That's another thing why I don't want to go back. Because discrimination is too much for me. I don't see the point why I worked harder, but because I'm Chinese, I get discriminated. I think it's rubbish. And I think it still happens. I see it in my own family. My [relative] married a Malay. Not just a Malay. A Malay with royal blood. So she gets double passes. One, because her husband is a Malay, and then she got all these side royalty benefits. That is totally not right. It's not right.

At least here, in London, you don't ... ok, maybe not now, maybe a few years back. Maybe there would be some that will call you stupid Chinese or what, but not so much now. But it's ... the impact is not so obvious. ... There's no quota. Whereas in Malaysia there are quotas on things. Like scholarships, two-thirds was always for *Bumiputera* and one-third is Chinese.

While studying in the UK, **L06** also observed differences between the Chinese and Malay scholars.

Author : When you got your scholarship, how many Chinese were there? Say altogether?

L06 : 65. See, I know. We all worked so hard when we were here. And during that time we try to maximise ... because we never knew whether we would have money to come back again. So while we were here we were working part-time, like restaurants – illegally. And then we use that money then to travel around. To Europe, or ... and we went for summer exchange to America. So we tried quite a lot of stuff. Basically we think that we were never going to come back. So we tried a lot of stuff.

Whereas the Malays that came with us, they don't work part-time. And they spend all their pocket money on buying hi-fi. It's really funny. Buying hi-fi or buy second hand cars. And whereas the Chinese will be spending time trying to explore, going out. It's very weird. Even my English uni friends at that point said: "You see, they buy hi-fi, you go abroad." It's quite funny (laughs).

Although this has been recounted with humour, it is evident that racial stereotypes persist and were carried into **L06's** migration experiences. **L06's** narratives demonstrate her easy identification with "the Chinese" and differentiation from "the Malays". As I have shown in **Part II**, the significance of British colonial legacies is in their longevity that transcends the material end of the colonial period. **L06's** case shows that even if efforts were made to transcend the *Bumiputera*-non-*Bumiputera* divide in the form of shared overseas education experiences as government scholars, in reality this may serve to reinforce existing divisions.

### 7.2.3 Summary

My respondents have engaged in various education migration strategies, all of which lead up to the ultimate goal of an overseas education. Factors such as their geographical location,

previous education system and access to available resources determine the specific strategies they and their parents have chosen to adopt. Malaysians residing in JB have the option of commuting daily to schools in Singapore. Those with good academic performance receive scholarships such as the ASEAN Scholarship administered by the Singapore government. MICSS students typically access overseas education as their UEC qualifications are not recognised for Malaysian public university admissions. Those with financial resources can opt to switch between various education mechanisms (e.g. twinning programmes), sometimes across national boundaries, to reduce the total amount of time spent in education.

While these strategies may appear to be creative means in capital accumulation, they are in fact limited manipulations within spaces constrained by structural forces. My respondents' education migration trajectories demonstrate that education – at various levels and stages – must be understood as a long-term continuum towards social mobility. In other words, education is not the end goal. It is in fact a stepping stone towards a wider choice of livelihood possibilities and career opportunities. More importantly, I argue that this needs to be understood in the context of colonial legacies inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian government. First, in terms of how overseas education has been ingrained as aspirations; and second, how the education-employment link has been unequally distributed and differentiated along *Bumiputera* lines.

### **7.3 Staying On and Further Migration**

#### **7.3.1 Original Plans**

Although some of my respondents embarked on their overseas education with the intention of working abroad, most had not made concrete plans at the onset of their trajectories. More importantly, most found that the migration journey dealt them unforeseen cards that changed their life courses. Some met their partners while in-migration, some married and settled down with children, some embarked on career changes that would bring them further afield. In this section, I elaborate on two themes: firstly, those who planned to stay on for overseas work experience or long-term emigration after graduation; and secondly, those who planned to return to Malaysia find themselves embarking on unplanned trajectories due to unexpected life circumstances.

### **Stay On**

**S25** was a MICSS student. At the time of her high school graduation, there were many twinning programmes offered by the mushrooming private college industry. She opted for a twinning programme in a KL private college and ended up in Australia. After graduating from an Australian university, **S25** stayed on to work for six years and obtained Australian PR status. At the time of the interview, she had relocated to Singapore with her Australian partner. She decided on the relocation for a few reasons.

My sis got married last year, so my mum was left alone at home [in Malaysia]. ... The other reason is because ... I never work in other country. I only worked in Australia. So I want to experience something a bit more. I actually came back for holiday every year. The year before, 2009, ... I saw a lot of changes in Singapore. And then I thought maybe I can give it a try. So then I say, ok I quit my job, relocate back. I saw a lot of job opportunities around. ... And a lot of friends keep telling me there are a lot of jobs for [my profession]. So then I said maybe just give it a try, no harm. If it's not working well, I can always go back home to Australia because I am a PR there.

**S25** and her partner initially planned for a two-year stint in Singapore. This is in part to gauge if they wanted to stay on and live permanently in Singapore or Asia in general. However, after a year in Singapore, they planned to return to Australia because they experienced difficulties in adjusting to the Singapore working culture.

**L08** went to the UK through a twinning programme. His intention was to stay on after graduation to gain overseas working experience. As he explains, this was also a strategy to circumvent his perception of a limited career future in Malaysia:

So I basically started looking for work nearly six months before I graduated. So that has always been the intention. It's also something I wanted to do myself as well. Ever since I was in high school, I wanted to work in a different country. So that's part of it. And the other part of it is **everyone knows politically you just don't have a very bright future in Malaysia**. And the idea is that given that you are in the UK, you might as well go for it and see if you can get a job here. And that's what I did.

After graduation, **L08** worked for six years in the UK. He enjoys living in London and cannot imagine living anywhere else. However, at the point of interview, he was applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)<sup>97</sup> while negotiating a career move to Australia. Although his original plan was to remain in the UK, this transnational career move emerged due to a few factors. Firstly, the industry he is in was not performing well in the UK and Europe.

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<sup>97</sup> Migrants on certain visa categories (including Tier 1 and Tier 2 work visas) can apply for ILR if they have been living in the UK in a relevant category for five years (UKBA, 2012b).

Comparatively, this industry is booming in Australia. Secondly, one of his friends had been headhunted to Australia and assisted in setting-up an interview for him. Thirdly, with the ILR, it is possible for him to live outside UK for up to two years without losing his PR status. This means that he could use this Australia work-stint to gauge his subsequent migration trajectory, which includes three possibilities: staying on in Australia, relocating to Singapore, or returning to the UK.<sup>98</sup>

**M18**, also a MICSS student, followed her brother's migration trajectory and went to Taiwan for her university degree. Her initial plan was to stay on in Taiwan, which she did for seven years. At the point of interview, she was already holding Taiwan PR and had returned to Malaysia. She explains her considerations for returning:

There were a few factors. Number one, because my family is here. So I thought: "It's better to come back if there are opportunities." Number two ... I think family is the main reason. ... Actually the [professional environment] in Taiwan is not really that great. So comparatively the [professional environment] in Malaysia ... is quite good. .... Because [my specialisation] is already saturated in Taiwan. But if I return to Malaysia, [this specialisation] is still developing. So in terms of career development, there are more spaces for development [in Malaysia].

### **Return to Malaysia**

**L01** went to the UK in the 1980s to complete a postgraduate degree. Her original intention was to return to her job in Malaysia after graduation. However, she met and eventually married her British husband. As she explains:

But the plan has always been I would be in Malaysia and he would come to Malaysia. That was the plan.

After graduation, she returned to Malaysia, and her husband followed once he found a job in Malaysia. As a foreigner married to a Malaysian woman, her husband was not able to secure PR status to remain in Malaysia. Although he was able to obtain an employment visa, this was on a short-term basis and created a sense of insecurity for the couple. Even though he adjusted well to the local culture and had sincere intentions to reside long-term in Malaysia, he was forced to leave Malaysia after a near-eviction incident.

I think what triggered was the fact that his contract was not renewed. And then we had such an awful experience ... we had a knock on the door at 5 o'clock in the evening saying that he needs to get out, he needs to get out very quickly because ... his visa will run out, and they did not get the work permit ... for his stay. So he rushed out quickly that night, drove all the way to Singapore, and then turned round and got back in. So it then hit him that it's really reliant on the job for his stay.

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<sup>98</sup> After working for 18 months in Australia, **L08** will be returning to the UK for a postgraduate degree.

**L01** and her husband eventually settled down in the UK, and their children have taken up British citizenship.

**L04** met her Malaysian husband in Singapore, when they were both completing their GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels. They then went to Australia for their university degrees. After graduation, they went to the UK to gain professional working experience. Their intentions had always been to return to Malaysia to contribute their knowledge and skills ("We always intended to go home. Always! We always intended to go home."). In fact, they had stayed on in the UK for seven years without contributing to the UK pension scheme because they were "not going to stay for long".

We were just hovering along on [work] visas. But we never ... I think **we've never intended to stay here**. But ... then our first [child] was diagnosed with [a learning disability]. And there were a lot of difficulties at the time with the diagnosis. And we had to work very hard on getting him the therapies and the specialist supports and everything. So we knew that in Malaysia there is nothing available. I mean, that was not even available in Singapore. So that was the crunch, you know: We are never going to go back with [our child's] diagnosis. So then we decided to proceed with the plan for permanent residence. So it was practically only six years ago that we changed our visas to a permanent visa, not a [work] visa. ... The diagnosis was kind of the clinch. We decided to, you know, we are going to stay.

**L16** has been circulating between Malaysia, the UK, USA, East Asia and Southeast Asia. She moved to the UK twice: the first time for 'A' Levels, and the second time for postgraduate studies. She initially planned to return to Southeast Asia to pursue her interests in local developing world issues. However, she met her British husband during her postgraduate studies and has since settled in the UK for more than ten years. This was obviously contrary to her original plan, as she describes herself as a "reluctant migrant" and "accidental migrant". At the present, her only reason for staying on in the UK is her husband.

Well, because I have no desire to ... um ... migrate. ... And I actually don't have any desire to live here. I really only stayed back because of my husband. I mean, obviously, people can ask why can't my husband move. And the reason is because [of my husband's family circumstances]. So really at that time, my husband was not interested in moving physically far away.

I mean he is now. But again, it's family reasons. Now unfortunately, fast forward many years later, my father-in-law is actually all alone in the UK, and actually not in good health. ... So we are here for family reasons.

So yeah, simply put, to talk about my reasons or motivations for staying in the UK, it really is because of my husband. That's why I am here.

For **L01**, **L04** and **L16**, their actual migration trajectories turned out differently from what they had intended in the first place. **L01** wanted to return to Malaysia, but ended up residing in the UK due to her British husband's difficulties in gaining PR status in Malaysia. **L04** also wanted to return to Malaysia initially, but her child's circumstance forced her to switch her "temporary" stay in the UK into a permanent one. **L16** had "no desire to migrate" at all, and wanted to be based in Southeast Asia to pursue her interests. However, her husband's family circumstances compelled her to settle in the UK. While she continues to harbour a desire to return to Malaysia, this remains a future hope, at least for now.

### 7.3.2 Option for Future Return

Although some of my respondents appear to have settled permanently in their respective geographical locations, many continue to articulate hopes for returning to Malaysia in the future. Three reasons were typically cited: first, Malaysia is after all "home"; second, returning to Malaysia is anticipated in the near future when parents in Malaysia become elderly and require care; and third, Malaysia is a good place for retirement. For the latter, the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme has been cited as an option for future return.

The MM2H programme, launched in 2002, offers a ten-year renewable multiple-entry long-term social visit pass for foreign lifestyle migrants and retirees who meet minimum financial requirements. MM2H migrants enjoy privileges such as freehold property purchase, tax-free offshore income, no inheritance tax, one tax-free car, and approval for a foreign maid (see *The Edge*, 2006). While previously applicants married to Malaysian nationals are ineligible to apply, this has been changed. Furthermore, MM2H migrants are allowed to work part-time or as investors in Malaysia, subject to approvals. MM2H has attracted 19,488 migrants from 2002 to August 2012, the majority of which are from East Asia and South Asia (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2013).

In conversations I had with my respondents, the MM2H programme has been cited as an alternative to return to Malaysia in the future (usually for retirement), even if they have renounced their Malaysian citizenship. For example, **M06** commented:

If you convert [i.e. renounce Malaysian citizenship to take up another citizenship], it is impossible for you to recover your Malaysian citizenship. The government will consider that you already betrayed, or you proved that you wanted to forego your citizenship. They will never consider that. ... But, you know, there are a lot of loop holes. If you want to come back, like MM2H, just buy a house and you can live here.



The existence of this programme is a significant factor in some of my respondents' foreign citizenship and PR status decisions.

### **7.3.3 Summary**

My respondents can be generally divided into two groups: those who originally planned to stay on in their education destinations after graduation, and those who originally planned to return to Malaysia upon graduation. However, they often find that their migration trajectories turn out differently. Developments in their career, marriage and family spheres during and after migration throw them into new and unplanned trajectories. Those who planned to stay on end up relocating or returning to Malaysia, while those who planned to return end up leaving Malaysia. However, there is a common assumption for an eventual return to Malaysia in the future.

On the one hand, these narratives show the unpredictable nature of migration intentions. On the other hand, I argue that my respondents were able to be in their positions to react, consider and make their migration decisions because they have *become* mobile Malaysians. Without the culture of migration in the first place, they probably would not have been able to enjoy the privileged position of being skilled migrants with relevant capital and resources to be able to choose to stay, leave, return, or circulate.

## **7.4 Discussion**

In this chapter, I traced my respondents' migration geographies across their different life stages. My findings are threefold. First, migration – or more accurately, mobility – has been a common part of mobile Malaysians' growing up years. This includes multiple and circulatory internal and international migrations. Second, in order to circumvent real and perceived structural constraints in the future, education migration has been pursued as early as the primary school stage. Third, education migration subsequently turns into planned and unplanned permanent stays and/or further migrations.

### **7.4.1 A Geographical Culture of Migration**

Mobile Malaysians' culture of migration is inherently geographical. Samers (2010) argues that a critical engagement with geographical concepts is crucial for theorising migration. In

particular, he focuses on “a plurality of spatial concepts” – place, nodes, friction of distance, territory and territoriality, scale and scalar (p. 36-37). I depart from this by interpreting “geography” in two interrelated ways: firstly, *connections* between places; and secondly, the *temporality* associated with a particular place.

The former is evident in my respondents’ migration geographies, which can be further delineated into two categories with geographical implications. The first relates to the blurring of dichotomised migration concepts – internal versus international migration; emigration versus immigration; leaving versus returning. As my respondents’ (and some of their parents’) migration geographies show, migration is on-going, circular, and perpetual. Thus, migration is mobility; leaving or returning is but only a part of one’s lifelong migratory life.

The second category pertains to education migration. Specifically, this relates to how geographies of origin and destination are linked up in a network of education migration flows. For example, JB-Singapore commuters and ASEAN scholars migrate to Singapore; MICSS students migrate to Taiwan, Singapore and the US; while those from private colleges and twinning programmes migrate to Australia and the UK. Significantly, geographical connections between these specific education migration destinations are not merely physical and scalar distances. Instead, these places are connected in a web of social networks that are continuously developed and perpetuated by alumni members and earlier migrants. **M04**, for example, mentions how he sought education migration advice from his high school seniors.

While this corresponds to existing migration theories such as network and cumulative causation, I argue that attention needs to be given to the racially-induced manner of such geographical flows in the Malaysian case. In particular, race is essentialised and reproduced in and by these education migration flows – as evident in **L15**’s and **L06**’s narratives. This highlights the need to examine how race matters to education and transnational migration, both theoretically and in terms of policy.

With regards to the temporalities of places, I have observed that amongst my respondents, those who have returned left Malaysia at a relatively later age compared to those who have not returned. A possible explanation is that mobile Malaysians who have lived for a longer period of time in Malaysia prior to emigration have accumulated active social networks and perhaps also working experience in Malaysia. The presence of an active professional network – instead of merely a social one – means that such contacts could be useful in facilitating mobile Malaysians’ return migration. Furthermore, prior working experience in Malaysia meant that

mobile Malaysians who are contemplating return have some understanding of the working culture in Malaysia, and would be able to adjust to this relatively easily. **M17**, for example, explained that his decision to return a second time was facilitated by his prior return.

I have yet to come across literature addressing the significance of living experience in the origin context prior to emigration, in terms of how that temporality influences the propensity for return migration and attitudes towards the home country. An exception is Soon's (2011) finding that the propensity for student-migrants in New Zealand to return to their home country after graduation is influenced by their perceptions of the lifestyle, work environment, opportunities to use one's acquired skills, and family and social ties in the home country. Further research is required to examine if my observation on skilled migrants – not just student-migrants – is valid, and if so, how this could contribute towards return migration theories and policies.

#### **7.4.2 Flexible Citizenship?**

Mobile Malaysians' education-led migration geographies may appear to be similar to Ong's (1999) flexible citizenship strategies or Waters' (2006, 2008) interpretation of Hong Kong student-migrants accumulating educational cultural capital in Canadian universities. In particular, **M17**'s and **L05**'s "fastest route possible" strategy of moving between international sites of education to capitalise upon differing start dates and programme durations echo the spatial strategies of middle-class Hong Kong families in Water's study. Waters (2006: p. 183) further highlights that "the geography of these processes is not incidental but fundamental to cultural capital accumulation and exchange". Indeed, my respondents' migration geographies across certain places suggest the mobilities to and from these nodes are vital in contributing towards them becoming mobile Malaysians.

However, I argue that there are a few differences and nuances in the Malaysian case. Firstly, my respondents often cannot articulate the reasons for them embarking upon these education migration strategies. Furthermore, they do not explicitly link their education migration strategies as ways to negotiate affirmative action policies. Often, I received blank looks or laughter at the question of whether they considered Malaysian public universities as one of their education options. Many would explain that their migration paths were decided by their parents, or that they followed their elder siblings' similar paths. In particular, those who went to the UK frequently referred to Malaysia's colonial connection to the British and their parents' belief in the prestige of a British degree. As Sin (2009, p. 290) notes:

*Despite 50 years of independence from British rule, Malaysian society, particularly among its older generation, still experiences a mild form of colonial mentality, apparent in the uncritical tendency to make reference to and follow standards set by the former British imperial power ... A British education is very attractive in this sense.*

Thus, Western education is not only desired because of the international recognition it accords, but this also has to do with a colonial legacy of linking English and overseas education to social mobility.

More importantly, pursuing overseas education and/or education pathways leading to overseas higher education are *default and automatic paths mobile Malaysians go into without questioning*. An exception, however, is MICSS students who were aware that they had limited further education choices in Malaysian public universities. This “habitual” practice of entering into a culture of migration unthinkingly needs to be differentiated from strategic acts of transnational cultural accumulation. Instead, the absent awareness that the migration geographies are ways of circumventing *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship rights suggests the internalised nature of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus. While their migration geographies are, in fact, strategies of capital accumulation and social mobility through education migration, the significant point is that these have been pursued without necessarily understanding the politics underlying their migration geographies. In other words, this is a story about the longevity of colonial legacies impacting upon a contemporary culture of migration, and less so about strategic migrants seeking transnational capital accumulation *per se*.

Secondly, I have observed that the education streams mobile Malaysians go through affect their subsequent migration geographies. While there are opportunities to exercise choice to some extent, these choices are also delimited under certain institutional constraints. For example, MICSS students are more-or-less constrained to Singapore and Taiwan as their education migration destinations, while students pursuing private pre-university and/or twinning programmes are more-or-less constrained to destinations where twinning partnerships have been established. Furthermore, the choices – of whether it is possible to pursue overseas education or not, and of which destination to go to – are limited by family capital constraints and changing political circumstances. For example, **L10** was able to go to the UK because his sibling did not manage to go to Australia. **L04** was able to go to an Australian university on a Malaysian government scholarship because she was at “the right time, right place”.

Thirdly, and relatedly, while I have observed migration geographies linking specific places as sites for accumulating educational capital (e.g. JB to Singapore; KL to twinning programmes to

Australia and the UK), many of the subsequent migration geographies pan out differently from what was initially planned for. This suggests that understanding mobile Malaysians' migration geographies as deliberate and strategic plans to pursue flexible citizenship is an incomplete interpretation. Instead, my findings show that migration is unpredictable, especially after an individual migrant becomes part of a household influencing his/her subsequent migration decisions. While migration geographies are also strategically decided upon as a household, the "strategic" nature of these decision-making needs to be analysed in the context of the corresponding limiting circumstances. For example, **L04** and her husband's decision to apply for settlement in the UK was only decided upon after their child's condition confined them to the UK, and after many years of believing that they were "going home". This decision was not in any way informed by their desire to capitalise upon migration capital.

My observations here corresponds to Salaff et al.'s (2010) analysis of how nine Hong Kong families negotiate migration decisions within a neo-institutional framework. The authors show that institutional change – in their case Hong Kong's reversion to China – was differentially interpreted by the Hong Kong families they studied. They argue that "[p]eople in diverse structural positions experience situations that prompt migration and encounter other circumstances that confound their plans" (p. 4). Similarly, my respondents' migration decisions can be seen as reactions to structural changes along their life trajectories that motivate migration in some instances, and inhibit in others. More importantly, these decisions are grounded in the family – in their roles as offspring in their parental household, as partners of their spouses, and as parents of their children. Seen in this way, their migration decisions can be understood as household-grounded reactions to life circumstances.

These migration geographies show that flexible citizenship strategies are after all not *that* flexible and smooth-sailing. Instead, the migration geographies are fraught with uncertainties, to which mobile Malaysians respond to changing circumstances, opportunities and constraints. This is not to dispute Ong's (1999) flexible citizenship thesis entirely, but like Lin (2012), I show that there are multiple experiences and narratives within *the* category of mobile Malaysian.

### **7.4.3 A Perpetuation of Colonial Legacies?**

In **Section 5.2.3**, I showed how Malaysia's post-colonial education system inherited the colonial legacy of race-based school systems. In **Section 6.3.2**, I showed how the education streams circumscribe mobile Malaysians' education migration destinations. In **Section 7.2.2**, I showed, through mobile Malaysians' narratives of their education experiences, that the

education system in post-colonial Malaysia largely perpetuates the colonial legacies of racial hierarchy and ideology due to the segregation of multi-ethnic Malaysian students broadly along racial lines. For example, **L15**'s experience shows that students in her residential school were predominantly ethnic Malays, and that her peers went on to attain social mobility, much like the Malay elite class created during the colonial era. **L06**'s experience as a non-*Bumiputera* government scholar showed how colonial-inherited legacies of racial essentialism and ideology continue to be reinforced in post-colonial Malaysia, despite the proclamation to nurture a collective *Bangsa Malaysia* in the national education philosophy.

This suggests that colonial legacies continue to live on after the end of the colonial period. Linking this to my earlier discussion of material and immaterial colonial legacies (**Section 2.2**), it appears that both material and immaterial legacies co-exist and intertwine. With respect to education in Malaysia, material legacies take the form of an education system broadly segregated along racial lines; while immaterial legacies take the form of internalised understandings about essentialised racial characteristics. These beliefs and dispositions continue to be perpetuated through the education system, despite state-led efforts to inculcate a sense of *de-racialised* and *cultural* belonging at the national scale.

Furthermore, what emerges from the interview-conversations with my respondents is the assumed perception that there is no future in Malaysia in terms of career and professional development, and that this is somehow linked to *Bumiputera*-differentiations in Malaysia. Here again, there were no explicit mentions or personal experiences of affirmative action policies restricting career possibilities. When pressed for examples of personal encounters, none were forthcoming (with few exceptions e.g. **L06**).

This highlights three points. First, as noted above, the specific experiences and encounters with *Bumiputera*-differentiation depend on the education streams they were embedded in.<sup>99</sup> Second, because mobile Malaysians “left” the country at relatively early ages, their understanding and interpretations of socio-political life in Malaysia are inevitably influenced by their experiences in Malaysia *prior* to emigration. Third, and relatedly, mobile Malaysians rely on their transnational social networks and online media for news and information about Malaysia. This means that their perceptions of socio-political developments in Malaysia are accumulated remotely, and perhaps selectively biased. These internalised beliefs and perceptions also contribute towards mobile Malaysians’ citizenship interpretations and practices, as I will next examine in **Chapter 8**.

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<sup>99</sup> This also appears to influence their relative ethno-national affiliation, a point I follow up in **Chapter 8**.

## CHAPTER 8. CITIZENSHIP: INTERPRETATIONS AND PRACTICES

In **Part II**, I outlined the making of Malaysia's citizenship habitus during Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial periods. I showed that Malaysia's citizenship habitus consists of three overlapping understandings. Firstly, citizenship is a privilege that did not come easily; secondly, citizenship is *Bumiputera*-differentiated with unequal rights; and thirdly, citizenship is equated to, and conflated with nationality. In **Chapters 6 and 7**, I examine how Malaysia's citizenship habitus translates into a culture of migration, especially in terms of migrating for education as an internalised practice without necessarily recognising that as a means to circumvent *Bumiputera*-differentiated structural obstacles.

In this chapter, I examine the interpretations and practices of citizenship carried into mobile Malaysians' migration trajectories. The empirical discussion is linked to my review of existing literature on citizenship, national identity and loyalty (**Section 2.3**). I deconstruct the subjective meanings of citizenship from the perspectives of mobile Malaysians as citizen/migrant/diaspora, and link their citizenship practices to Malaysia's citizenship habitus. While this chapter focuses primarily on my respondents' interpretations and practices of their Malaysian citizenship, this is often also a result of relative reactions to other citizenship/PR statuses in the host societies. However, I wish to underline the importance of Malaysia's citizenship habitus in constituting mobile Malaysians' understanding of Malaysian citizenship first and foremost, which in turn shapes their understanding and practices of *other* citizenships that are interpreted vis-à-vis their Malaysian citizenship.

Following this introduction, I discuss the different ways of interpreting and practising citizenship amongst my respondents. In **Section 8.1**, I look at how mobile Malaysians interpret their Malaysian citizenship as a form of inherited belonging. This sense of inherited belonging can be further examined through two components: firstly, as a kind of primordial belonging; and secondly, as a sense of ethno-national identity that is intimately-linked to the education stream experiences. In **Section 8.2**, I discuss the practices of citizenship strategies amongst my respondents. This includes citizenship as a form of security, as well as the nuanced interpretations and enactments of citizenship as loyalty. Finally, **Section 8.3** concludes this chapter with a summary and discussion.

## 8.1 Citizenship as Inherited Belonging

### 8.1.1 Primordial Belonging

As I have shown in **Chapter 5**, Malaysian citizenship has been conflated with national identity and an emphasis on national loyalty. At the same time, there is an ambiguous awareness of ethnic differentiation that has been sensitised and prohibited from public debate. This has translated into my respondents' interpretations of their Malaysian citizenship: they seem to accord their Malaysian citizenship with primordial and emotional significance. Here, I use "primordial" to capture a sense of *fundamental, naturalised, and in-born sense of origin*. For my respondents, this is often conflated with nationality and a sense of unquestioned affiliation to Malaysia.

However, upon closer scrutiny, I found that the "Malaysia" that they identify with is not the nation or country *per se*. Instead, "Malaysia" is often thought of as *experiences of growing up in Malaysia* (e.g. childhood memories, geographical places, specific events), *social network* (e.g. family, relatives, friends), and *similar values and characteristics shared by an imagined community*. The imagined community (B. Anderson, 2006), however, is further stratified by place of origin, ethnic group, and education stream. In other words, as Massey (1984) pointed out, geography matters. While these are true in most of my respondents' cases, they are particularly evident in my conversations with **S04**, **L12**, **L04** and **S18**. I have chosen to provide excerpts of conversations at length as they bring out the nuances and paradoxes that would be obscured by short quotes and consolidated responses.

#### Kampong

My conversation with **S04** below branched off from a discussion on his expectations as a citizen. Having been a long-time PR after attending university in Singapore, he appreciates the Singapore brand – transparency, meritocracy and efficiency – and wishes the same for Malaysia because "the heart is always there". When asked about his strong affiliation to Malaysia, the following conversation ensued.

S04 : When you are born in a place, you are always rooted there. ... it's like your visual record that formulate the place that you belong. I think as human beings you like to belong. You are not a single entity. So, physical environment is one. When people ask you where you are from, "Oh, I come from where and which town and which state, which *kampong*" [lit. "village", used to mean "hometown"]. Rather than, you know, broadly you are Asian or broadly you are Chinese. So that is always that kind of reference back to where you were born, where you were created. And I suppose in a way it's like how you play



with the dirt, ... how you grew up with people around you ... the trees that you climb, and the kind of food that you taste, and the smell that you experience – it will always be with you, it will never go away. So there's where it's in the heart.

Author : ... But then Singapore and Malaysia is also very similar, in terms of the physical environment, ...

S04 : Broad cultural and social fabric, yes. But you will know KL is different from Ipoh, Ipoh is different from KB. So it's that kind of very subtle differences and it's just the spirit of the place that so anchors you to the place. I'm from Penang. So most people from Penang are, how do I say, pampered on the taste buds. So we will always say "Nothing is better than the food from Penang". So in a way that is our identity. ...

Author : When you think of this Malaysian identity, do you think of it more in terms of Penang than ...?

S04 : No, I think broadly Malaysia first. Because when you say where you are from, it's Malaysian. Then further point, oh that particular *kampong*, that particular street.

**S04's** narrative brings attention to the place-specific experiences that shapes one's identity and belonging. More importantly, this conversation shows **S04's** internal awareness that "Malaysia" means specifically his *kampong*. The notion of *kampong* is encapsulated in Penang and the typical characteristics of Penangites,<sup>100</sup> even if he would outwardly introduce himself as Malaysian first and foremost. In other words, Penang – his *kampong* – encompasses the physical, social and cultural components that make up the "Malaysia" **S04's** heart resides with.

The notion of *kampong* came up time and again in my conversations with other respondents. **L12** was born in Malaysia, but followed her family migration to other parts of Southeast Asia. Her family returned to Malaysia again, where she spent her adolescent and college years in KL. She thinks fondly of this experience and appears to associate this specific space-time with her strong affiliation as a Malaysian. As she explains:

Just, you know, like going to the *mamak*<sup>101</sup> with my friends. When we were in college, before university, I have a lot of very good friends. ... My best school friends have moved to London or Australia or America, so they are not really in Malaysia. We only go back there for holidays. But my college friends, they are all still in KL. So from that network, I have really good people left in KL. So you go to the *mamak*, you go to the cyber cafes, then you go to class. That was just what we did every day. It was just relaxed. I like that. Yeah, that was good.

<sup>100</sup> A colloquial term for people from Penang.

<sup>101</sup> *Mamak* refers to the Tamil Muslims in Malaysia, who typically own and operate 24-hour roadside stalls, cafes and restaurants. *Mamaks*, referring to the food establishments, are popular hang-out places for Malaysian youths.

**L12** holds a PR from a European Country X, which accords her free entry into the UK and European Union countries. In addition, she has extensive social networks spread across major cities in the world. Despite her capacity to be internationally mobile, she demonstrates very strong affiliation to being “Malaysian” and a strong desire to return to Malaysia. When asked to explain what she meant to convey by being Malaysian, she said:

What do I mean by it? I don’t know. I mean, I don’t even really mean anything. I just mean that ... that’s my home. I don’t mean like I have to go back there. ... I certainly don’t feel like: “Go Malaysia!” Like ... I mean, I’m patriotic in the sense that I’m proud of my country. But I’m not like I go overseas and I ... you know, there’s not some political ideology there. It’s just a sense of ... that’s my home. Yeah. *Kampong*.

Although she did not explicitly link her *kampong* to KL and her growing up years there, this is evident in her reply to my question on the notion of “home”.

Author : So throughout your movements across all these different places, have you ever felt that any one place is more home to you?

L12 : KL (affirmatively).

Author : KL? Even now?

L12 : Yeah, KL ... I mean, London is home to me as well now. But in a different way. Like KL to me is more stable. Because I have old friends and I have family there. And I have old memories. London is home as well. But a dynamic home, you know? If I leave London, I will still have friends in London. But I’m not going to have the roots. Like I don’t have roots in London. So that makes it very difficult to [stay]. It’s easy to leave, I think, because you don’t have roots.

Author : Comparatively you think of KL as where your roots are?

L12 : Yeah, absolutely.

The sense of having roots embedded in one’s *kampong* shows the emotional significance of hometown, memories and social relationships associated to a particular time-place. While this is often conflated to the idea of being “Malaysian”, it is actually embedded in sub-national geographies. More importantly, the specific geographical location (city, town, neighbourhood, or even a street) grounds individual interpretations of what “Malaysia” means to them, even when they evoke a “Malaysia” that is tied at the national scale.

### **“Umbilical Cord That Won’t Come Out”**

**L04** is perhaps the most articulate of the primordial feelings she has with her Malaysian citizenship. As she explains:

Yet, there is this string. It's like this umbilical cord that won't come out (laughs). I think if we were truly cut off from Malaysia, then I really won't have bothered much, except for this family bit.

When asked about what her Malaysian citizenship meant to her, **L04** explains:

It means a lot me, I have to say. To give it up is something that we haven't been able to do. And ... It's my childhood I suppose. It's almost like giving up your childhood. ... My childhood. My life. Part of my life. All the good friends and the family.

This sense of perpetual belonging and a strange sense of loyalty has been something she negotiates with. Throughout her migration trajectories across Singapore, Australia and the UK, she has always believed that "we were always planning to go home", "we always wanted to go home", and "we never intended to stay here". Having made the observation that none of her Malaysian ASEAN Scholar peers who studied in Singapore went back to Malaysia, she voluntarily brought up the issue of return as loyalty.

L04 : So where is the loyalty then (laughs)? I don't understand. Where is the loyalty if not one went back?

Author : But does going back mean you are loyal?

L04 : I don't know. But I don't know. Yeah, sometimes I think so. Going back means you are loyal. I don't know. I don't know.

Author : Yeah, but staying away, like your case, you are also loyal.

L04 : No, I don't feel loyal. That's what I mean. I feel angry about the situation. I feel ... yeah, I don't know. I don't know. **I feel there's a connection that's like an umbilical cord that I can't break. It's like you can't break from where you grew up in. Where you were born in. Something like that.** That country still stays there. Because I can't ... Yeah, I could consider myself British maybe in 20 years' time. But British doesn't really mean anything. ... Because they say that 60% weren't born in Britain. You can be British, but where you are actually from is a different matter. It's a personal matter, where you were born.

Author : So in that sense, even if you take up British citizenship, you will still think you are Malaysian?

L04 : I will still think I am born in Malaysia. ... Yeah, I will say I was from Malaysia. But right now, if it's in a restaurant, I would say I am Singaporean (laughs). ... So every time when we are in a restaurant and someone goes: "Oh, where are you from?" I go: "Japan! Singapore!" I said (in hushed tones): "Don't say Malaysia. I don't want to go in any conversation about ... about ... political issues." **So in that sense I'm not proud of Malaysia. Yet I have a loyalty to it.** If not I would have readily given up my passport.

While **L04** is aware of the strong "loyalty"-like emotion she associates with her Malaysian citizenship, this emotional connection appears to be tied to her childhood experiences, friends

and family in Malaysia. However, keeping her Malaysian passport is important to her because the Malaysian citizenship signifies an umbilical cord that perpetually ties her identity, belonging and self to “Malaysia”. Consequently, returning to Malaysia is a demonstration of loyalty, and something she had previously conceived of as automatic and non-negotiable: she was always going to return home to Malaysia.

**“Malaysian Citizenship Feels Ok”**

S18 has resided in Singapore since her secondary education. She is married to a Singaporean, and currently holds a dependent PR. For her, her Malaysian citizenship signifies her connection to Malaysia via her childhood memories, as well as characteristics of Malaysians that she clearly perceives to be different from characteristics of Singaporeans. As she explains:

Author : So for you, what is your Malaysian citizenship?

S18 : As far as I can see, it’s the ties with my past. Sometimes, I tell people that I’m Malaysian, then they tell me that they are Malaysian also. Then we have something to talk (laughs). ... I don’t know. It is something that ... how would I say ... Feels ... feels ok. I mean, the idea of me being a Singaporean is like, “How can I be a Singaporean?” that kind of thing (laughs). I cannot be Singaporean *lah*, Singaporeans are like so dadadada.

Author : So what are Singaporeans?

S18 : (Laughs) Well, the stereotype *lah*. I mean they are more materialistic, ... not so good natured, good-hearted. You know ... like my friends, they meet a Malaysian, then they will say: “Oh, this is a nice Malaysian girl. Nice Malaysian girl.” You don’t hear people saying: “Nice Singaporean girl.” That kind of thing. So yeah. I have this identity, there’s this identity thing that I’m still rather sort of attached to as part of my character that ... It’s a very abstract thing *lah*, what this Malaysian citizenship means to me. It’s not, nothing I would say concrete at the moment.

So being an abstract thing, if there is a harsh reality that forces me to choose, maybe war or whatever, I don’t know. Maybe eventually I will have to choose Singapore. In that kind of drastic situation *lah*. Because I can’t expect my husband to be separated from me, and like we are both fighting against each other kind of thing. And he’s definitely ... I don’t think he will ever consider himself Malaysian. He has never been staying in Malaysia ever before. So I’ll have to decide.

Author : Do you consider yourself Malaysian?

S18 : I do. I do. But maybe it’s a wrong perception of myself at this point now.

Author : What do you mean?

S18 : I consider myself Malaysian, but I don’t know who else considers me Malaysian. Like I think I speak like a Singaporean, but a lot of people still say

that they can still tell when I speak Chinese (laughs), because the accent is still quite strong for Chinese. But English-wise, I think you can't really tell for Malaysians or Singaporeans, because probably they speak quite similar.

Author : Do you consider yourself Malaysian?

S18 : Yeah.

Author : So what is Malaysian to you?

S18 : What is Malaysian to me? It's a place where I was born. It's a place where I grew up in.

Author : I mean the Malaysian identity.

S18 : The Malaysian identity? I don't think I have a Malaysian identity actually. I think I have a Singaporean identity. I mean the way that the school taught us and everything. The way that they brainwashed us here. So in terms of identity-wise, it's like you don't know that I'm Malaysian, a lot of people, lets say they ask me a lot of questions, or they find out maybe in terms of, talked to me about way of life or certain things, they might actually categorise me as Singaporean.

**So I think the Malaysian part is really just the attachment to the idea that I was born there.** Other than that, I don't have an identity. It's more like it was my birth place, and I spend a lot of my childhood there. That's why I still feel that I am rather Malaysian. And maybe certain traits of being Malaysian are still with me. I guess like maybe those few formative years when you are younger, one or two traits actually stay until now. Of course along the way after I came [to Singapore] I picked up a lot of new traits also. ... So maybe there's 30% – I mean counting by me at this point in life – I would say 30 or 35% of that experience is from Malaysia. Then let's say the remaining is from Singapore. But there's still 30%. It's not like totally no more, that kind of thing. ... So maybe at the point whereby it's totally no more, I can't feel that I can remember my childhood anymore, maybe one day I'm so old that I can't remember my childhood, or I can't remember all those good memories of like spending time with my grandpa, those kind of things. Then maybe at that point I would say, I think yeah, I don't feel Malaysian at all. But at this point I can say that I feel Malaysian, thanks to all of that. Quite, quite ... I don't know, strange I guess.

**S18's** linking of her Malaysian identity with her Malaysian citizenship has also influenced her citizenship decision-making. This is evident in her answer to my question of whether she has strong feelings about retaining her Malaysian citizenship.

S18 : A few years ago I used to have such strong feelings. But ... recently, I suppose it's a little bit less. As in, if there is a reason to seriously consider, I would. But preferably not *lah*. Preferably still not. I know quite a lot of friends also who are like here forever, like really much longer than I have been here, but they still hold on to their Malaysian citizenship. For some reason.

Author : So for you do you feel something like stopping you from changing your citizenship?

S18 : Stopping me? It's more like nothing to push me. It's not like something is stopping me. It's more like nothing to push me over at this point.

In other words, she is comfortable with her present status as Malaysian citizen and Singapore PR, and finds no real reason to relinquish her Malaysian citizenship unless the “harsh reality” forces her to do so.

### **Summary**

My respondents often associate their Malaysian citizenship with a sense of primordial identity and belonging. The “primordial”, however, is attached to their hometown, childhood memories, and family members present in Malaysia. This strong emotional connection is conflated with their retention of Malaysian citizenship. It is as if retaining Malaysian citizenship reaffirms and proves their self-identity as Malaysian. By contrast, giving up Malaysian citizenship for another citizenship is not a preferred option. While this could be due to pragmatic reasons, the considerations are nevertheless articulated as “Malaysian citizenship = perpetual and primordial belonging”.

### **8.1.2 Ethno-National Identity**

In **Section 5.2.3**, I explained how Malaysia's national education policy has attempted to instil a sense of national identity and unity through the national curriculum. However, the existence of race-based education streams and school-types – a colonial legacy – has paradoxically created divergences in my respondents' ethno-national orientations and attitudes towards *Bumiputera* policies. In **Section 7.2.2**, I described some of my respondents' education experiences that served to reinforce the racial stereotypes stratifying the post-colonial Malaysian society. In this section, I examine how the education streams translate into my respondents' ethno-national identifications.

### **Imagined Community**

Malaysia's citizenship habitus – in the form of *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship, and race-based affirmative policies – also impacts on how my respondents think about the “Malaysia” they associate with. This is particularly evident in my conversation with **S05**. The excerpt below

followed an earlier conversation about her distrust of government initiatives such as the NEM. Following a comment that she would rather earn her money in Singapore because of the stronger currency than returning to Malaysia, **S05** voluntarily brought up the point on feeling proud to be a Malaysian.

S05 : Oh well, Malaysia is a good place (laughs). I'm proud to be a Malaysian.

Author : You are proud to be Malaysian?

S05 : Yes! (smiles)

Author : What do you think is the definition of Malaysian?

S05 : The definition of Malaysian?

Author : What are you proud of?

S05 : What am I proud of? ... The Chinese (affirmatively). Let's just talk about the Chinese. There is a special quality that the Singaporeans don't have. ... Because we are subjected to these so-called unequal treatments for a long time, so we will work extra hard to achieve what we want. And yet at the same time we know what we should do in what circumstances. I mean, we know our limits. Because you know you have a limit here, like there are some facts you have to acknowledge, but you have to work extra hard to overcome them. Trying to compromise within these given scenarios, but still being able to achieve your own purpose.

So I think this ability to forgive and to be tolerant,<sup>102</sup> this ability is not found in people from every country. You must have had gone through certain conditions in certain environments. For example, Singaporeans, majority are Chinese, and the government is quite fair and transparent, so there are things everyone takes for granted. But Malaysian-Chinese may not think that way.

So I feel that with this advantage – I think this is an advantage – I believe that Malaysian-Chinese can survive no matter which part of the world they go to. They won't be at a disadvantage. Like language is one of the advantages, because we are proficient in English, Mandarin, Malay. So we can survive in Western countries, we can survive in China, we can survive in Southeast Asia. So I think this is a very strong advantage.

For example my company has some China projects, and we face these kinds of problems. Singaporeans' Mandarin may not be that good. Because our reports are written in Mandarin. But Malaysian-Chinese are able to do that. Of course it won't be as good as the PRC Chinese, but at least it can do the job. Singaporean Chinese are not able to do that. That's why I think I'm proud to be a Malaysian.

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<sup>102</sup> **S05** used the term 包容, which carries connotations of embracing/accommodating diversity, magnanimity, and inclusiveness.

Author : But based on what you have just said, your definition of Malaysian is Malaysian-Chinese. Because when you think of Malaysian, you immediately talked about Malaysian-Chinese.

S05 : Yes, I would feel more for ... Because we are after all Chinese, so I can relate better from this perspective.

Another thing I would like to say is this. I sometimes go on business trips to China. The clients know we are Chinese, and that we can speak Mandarin, and probably know that our ancestors were from China. They will say: “You are after all Chinese. Welcome back to our motherland.”<sup>103</sup> I don’t agree with that. ... although my ancestors came from China a long time ago, but I am now Malaysian, I’m not a PRC Chinese. So I will position myself like this, a kind of identity. ... Because I don’t think I’m PRC Chinese. I am Malaysian! I was born and grew up in Malaysia! You can’t say I’m PRC Chinese, even though I am a descendent of the Chinese from China.

S05’s sense of pride and affiliation to an imagined community is tied to a specific ethno-national group – the Malaysian-Chinese. It is important to note that her affiliation is clearly distinguished from a broader Chinese ethnic group that could incorporate the PRC Chinese, the Singaporean Chinese, and the Malaysian Chinese. In fact, she carefully draws the boundary, even between Malaysian-Chinese and Singaporean-Chinese despite the close geographical proximity and shared histories. Furthermore, her narrative shows a strong sense of national pride – albeit one that is tied to a Malaysian-Chinese pride.

S05’s narrative suggests the effects of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus in a number of ways. Firstly, the Malaysian citizenship is equated to, and conflated with, a strong sense of nationality. In her case, this is tied to an *ethno*-nationality. Secondly, affirmative action policies in Malaysia appear to have resulted in a culture of hard work and self-reliance amongst the Malaysian-Chinese. This could be interpreted as a way of circumventing structural obstacles. As I have observed and argued in **Chapter 7**, the culture of migrating for education has become an internalised social mobility strategy that may not be consciously recognised as a way to negotiate structural constraints imposed by the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies. S05’s narrative hints at this matter-of-fact stance – “we know our limits” – yet at the same demonstrates the agency of Malaysian-Chinese in seeking alternative pathways outside of Malaysia. One wonders what will become of the future generations of Malaysian-Chinese – in terms of their Malaysia-tied affiliation – as individuals and families migrate, settle and build their lives outside of the geographical Malaysia.

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<sup>103</sup> Although the term 祖国 is translated as “motherland”, the term typically evokes the notion of the native country or country of origin.



**Education Streams Matter**

The degrees and types of ethno-national consciousness amongst my respondents are also tied to the specific education stream they have gone through. In general, those who were Chinese-educated (including MICSS and national-type Chinese schools) demonstrate a greater sense of affiliation to Malaysian-Chinese; while those who were educated in national schools had a lesser sense of ethno-national affiliation. **M06** makes the observation between herself (Chinese-educated) and her husband (Chinese who was educated in national-school), in her reply to my question on what does her Malaysian citizenship mean to her.

I also don't know what kinds of benefits and disadvantage my Malaysian citizenship brings me. If you ask if I am patriotic, I have never felt that I am. Actually, I have thought about this question a while ago. Once I was on a business trip, and I met a European on the plane. He was very strange, he asked me a question, he asked me what am I. I said "I'm Malaysian". Then he asked if I am Chinese. I said "Malaysian-Chinese". Then he asked if I am more loyal to China or Malaysia. I was shocked. I never thought about this question before. So I replied to him "Of course to Malaysia". But privately I thought about this matter. So, yes, I am Malaysian. So what? But loyalty to China, of course not. Like when it comes to culture, maybe because we studied in Chinese schools, maybe we read about Chinese culture, Chinese history, and all those stories. Maybe that's why we are more inclined to China. When we travel and see the place, we might feel that it's familiar. So I'm ... sometimes I'm very confused, in relation to my [identity].

But for my husband, he won't have such thoughts. When he visits China, to him it is a foreign culture. But for us who are Chinese-educated, it's very familiar. So there is a difference. I think there is a difference between me and my husband. When they [i.e. Malaysian-Chinese educated in national-type schools] view Malaysia and when they view China.

**M06's** observation shows that Malaysia's education system – which in itself is an outcome *and* perpetuator of Malaysia's citizenship habitus – has produced a clear divide between people who went through different education streams. Indeed, this is also something I found amongst my respondents. **S07** studied in a national school, and appears to demonstrate a more tolerant and less victimised view of *Bumiputera* policies. Growing up with Malay friends, he understands that "the Malay culture is a very gentle culture". Furthermore, "if you know them and you grew up with them, you'll feel very comfortable, you won't feel intimidated". As he narrates his experience:

Like for example I tried to get into the Royal Military College.<sup>104</sup> There were several rounds of cuts, short-listing, and I went to the very last round. ... But I knew my chances were slim. Because the quota for non-Malays is very small. So I'm competing with non-Malays, I'm not competing with everybody. So I've got friends who went with me, who

<sup>104</sup> The Royal Military College (RMC) is a school training young Malaysians for service in the Malaysian Armed Forces. It is seen as a prestige to enter the school due to its highly-selective admission tests.

are Malays. And I know I'm better in grades, better in sports, better in every category. But he got it. So I knew it was due to race. But I never felt grudge against them. Because I can see where that came from, because they are afraid of you. You are a non-Malay, so [they] want to protect the status quo.

So ... I never felt a grudge. I mean I felt sad I couldn't go in. There were a few of us, only one Malay guy got in. The rest, there were a few Malays who also didn't get it. We hang out, we didn't get it, so it's ok. You know, he went in, we were quite happy for him. But I knew my chances are very tough, because I checked the other Chinese ... You can have seven As, that guy's got nine (laughs). You run so fast, he will run slightly faster. Because they, it's not just the grades and sports, the things that they tested you on. You might be a school runner, that guy is a District guy. You are the District guy, that guy is the State guy. ... That's why when I went in I knew from day one I had to compete in a long race. In that sense.

But again, I always tell my wife that I never felt a grudge. Because I accept it, because it's sort of like, in America they call it affirmative action. They want to help the native American, the Afro-American, because in some sense they were disadvantaged. So you want to give them a break, it's ok.

But it makes me better. It makes me compete more; it makes me a better person. So for me to be equal I know I have to be better. So I will always be better. So when you come to a place where everything is neutral, you are already better. I mean by instinct you are. So you go to school overseas, you are better because you have to be better. To be equal. So it's the same. So even when we go to the States it's the same. It's the same. You have to be better, you know? Because you are foreigner you are not born there. You know, you are not American, you speak funny. And so if you want to get a job in America you gotta be better than the Americans. It's ok, I don't hold any grudge against them. As long as mentally you are ready, you do more.

So ... Maybe it's something, I don't know, maybe it's something that is advantageous for the Malaysian non-Malays. It spurs you on. It gives you an extra dimension. So maybe we should be thankful for that.

While **M06** emphasised the Chinese-orientation from the perspective of a Chinese-educated Malaysian, **S07** emphasised the understanding and tolerance of *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies. These differences, however, do not translate into the Chinese-educated emigrating to seek greater spaces of manoeuvre, nor does it translate into the national-type school-educated remaining in Malaysia because they can better understand and tolerate structural constraints imposed upon them. This is because non-*Bumiputeras* from either education streams face the same higher education and work-related structural constraints. The constraints may not be recognised at the primary, secondary and pre-university stages, but they become visible and real at the higher education stage and beyond. This has contributed to a culture of migration, especially for education.

### **Summary**

In deconstructing what “Malaysia” actually means for my respondents, I find that geography matters in a number of ways. Firstly, “Malaysia” is thought of as the *kampong* of one’s origin and memories. Thus, affiliation is actually tied to sub-national geographies, most usually with a sense of home. Secondly, “Malaysia” is thought of as membership to an imagined ethno-national community. Conceptual boundaries are drawn between different ethnic communities *in* Malaysia, as well as between the same ethnic communities *outside* of Malaysia. Thirdly, the specific education stream an individual goes through affects the degrees and type of ethno-national affiliation. National-schooled individuals appear to understand and tolerate *Bumiputera* policies, while Chinese-educated individuals appear less so. However, this does not mean that national-schooled individuals are less likely to emigrate. Taken altogether, these demonstrate the longevity of colonial legacies in post-colonial Malaysia, particularly in relation to *Bumiputera*-differentiated social stratification.

## **8.2 Practising Citizenship Strategies**

### **8.2.1 Citizenship as Security**

One component of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus is that citizenship is a privilege that did not come easily or automatically. In other words, citizenship is an exclusive right that should be treasured and appreciated, not something to be given-up easily. The increasingly stringent citizenship and immigration policies in destination countries such as Singapore and the UK also signals that citizenship in the transnational migration context is not earned easily. The perceptions and understanding of citizenship as a form of security greatly influences my respondents’ citizenship and PR decisions and strategies.

### **Keeping Malaysian Citizenship “Just-in-Case”**

In conversations with my respondents, there has been a recurrent theme of keeping their Malaysian citizenship “just in case”. Interestingly, this has been explained as emotional affiliation and identity as Malaysian, although practically few are optimistic about realising an actual return in the future. The following conversation I have with **S25** illustrates this. **S25** is holding Australian PR after living there for eight years. She moved to Singapore with her partner with the possibility of settlement in Singapore.

Author : Now that you are holding Australian PR, would you consider taking Australian citizenship?

S25 : (answers immediately) No.

Author : Why?

S25 : Because I wouldn't want to give up my Malaysian [citizenship] (laughs).

Author : Don't want to give up your Malaysian [citizenship]?

S25 : Yeah, even though I don't really like Malaysia (laughs). Not [that] I don't really like [Malaysia], I never think that I will go back one day. But still, you don't know [about the] future, you don't want ... Maybe one day you [could] set up [a] company there. That's one thing. **But still deep in my heart I'm still Malaysian. I don't think I want to give up Malaysian citizenship.** Yeah, no.

Author : But you haven't thought about going back to Malaysia?

S25 : No.

Author : What about for retirement?

S25 : Maybe because you know, that's my home. You grew up there, you have your best memories, your school, your friends, your family is there. I don't know. Even my sister, she studied in Singapore since primary school. Basically she grew up here, the entire education. And now she got married and she has a baby. She still keeps Malaysia passport. She's only holding Singapore PR.

I have a lot of friends, Malaysians. They are in Australia. Everyone [is] holding the PR, they will keep their [Malaysian] citizenship. But no one ever think they will go back to Malaysia to work, or to live. They go back every year to visit their family. But this question has been asked many times. ... I think only one actually give up [Malaysian] citizenship to take Australia passport.

And you know the Australia PR, they renew every five years. ... within that five years, you need to stay in Australia for two years. And the other three years you can go overseas. ... So, if you work out that way, the maximum you can leave Australia and go back will be six years ... otherwise you will lose your PR status.

So some of [my friends] say they will eventually come back to work. Maybe not Malaysia but Singapore because of the currency. ... the day they decided to come back for good, they will apply Australian citizenship. So then they come back to work. Just to keep the status there. But actually, so far no one has done that [i.e. giving up Malaysian citizenship]. Only one.

**S25's** narrative demonstrates three points. First, Malaysian citizenship is equated with a sense of emotional identification that is conflated with one's past experience and existing social network in Malaysia. Underlying this is an assumption of disloyalty if one is to give up one's

Malaysian citizenship. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the post-colonial Malaysian state's technique of governing, where emigrants are seen as disloyal citizens (**Section 5.2.2**).

Second, while keeping Malaysian citizenship is articulated as a safeguard to enable a future return (e.g. for retirement or to set-up business in Malaysia), this does not mean that return will necessarily be actualised. Related to that, Singapore is often included in the geographical imaginaries of “returning home”. In other words, mobile Malaysians could reconcile “returning home” to Singapore and not Malaysia, as this enables them to enjoy Singapore's stronger currency, while enjoying the geographical proximity to Malaysia. Third, practices of citizenship and PR strategies by mobile Malaysians in similar situations have become common knowledge and this circulates within their social networks.

### **Paradox: Security and Insecurity**

I also find similar sentiments amongst mobile Malaysians located in London/UK. Here, I detail **L11**'s case. **L11** has taken up British citizenship but did not renounce Malaysian citizenship. I have also come across anecdotal stories of overseas Malaysians – especially in the UK and USA – doing the same. While this may appear at first glance as a kind of flexible citizenship strategy, **L11**'s narrative uncovers the nuances of her citizenship decision.

I just want a spare citizenship. Because ... I mean, I just don't think Malaysia is ... I mean, it's probably fine, but you know, we've been living away ... it's like 1969 May riots happened. I just don't think things are necessarily going to get any better. So, you know, I just want a spare citizenship, somewhere else. It's safer. Because you know, if riots happen, if things get really bad, if you chase Chinese people out or whatever, or it's just, you know ...

As it is, the point is that I don't even really want to work there. So I don't ... I almost don't see a need to be part of ... to have a citizenship of that country. But I want to have it just so that ... because it's impossible for Chinese people to get citizenship under the current system, so I don't want to lose it. Because I want ... if they count the census or something, I'm still recorded as a Chinese person in Malaysia so that you know, they can't trample on us too much. Because technically there's an additional Chinese person, a certain quota.

I don't want to just give up my citizenship because I kind of have **a strange kind of patriotism** in a way. It's like, you know, for those people who are still there, they need to be helped. They need some help to be counted or something. But I don't actually, under the current situation, I don't actually want to work there, I don't actually want to be part of it. So I just want to be somewhere else with the citizenship, I'm kind of protected. Yeah.

I mean, I pay taxes here. They are kind of ... nice to me. You know, they are kind of our colonial ex-masters so we have lots of things in common. It makes sense.

**L11**'s narrative demonstrates three points. First, the awareness that the Malaysian citizenship is difficult to come by – especially for non-*Bumiputeras* – contributed to her desiring a “spare” citizenship as a security measure. This is linked to her fear of ethnic discrimination, which is explained through the example of the 1969 May riots. This shows how this incident has been deeply embedded in the psyche of Malaysians as a reminder and warning of possible racial tensions in Malaysia. Second, there is an awareness of “a strange kind of patriotism” that cannot be fully articulated. It is almost like loving “Malaysia” despite not having that love reciprocated. However, the “Malaysia” that **L11** refers to appears to be “Malaysian-Chinese” and the position of that community in the larger Malaysian society. Third, there is a sense of connection and familiarity to the UK that is linked to the colonial past. While this may not have directly pushed **L11** to take up British citizenship, it has definitely contributed to her coming to the UK for education in the first place.

### **Reality Bites**

For **S06**, the decision to convert from Malaysian to Singaporean citizenship involves negotiating strong emotions alongside pragmatic considerations. For seven to eight years after his marriage, he warned his wife against asking him to take up Singapore citizenship (“Don’t talk to me about citizenship, ok? It’s taboo. Don’t talk to me about that. No discussion at all, ok?”) because he felt a strong sense of belonging to Malaysia and still upheld the intention to return to Malaysia at some point in time.

However, his perspectives changed subsequently. Firstly, he took up Singapore citizenship in consideration of his wife and children’s future. His wife’s Singapore PR status was dependent on his. In the event of any mishaps to him before their children turn 18 or 21, she would be vulnerable to the loss of her PR status. He was also enticed by citizenship benefits given by the Singapore government in terms of baby bonuses, children’s education subsidies etc. Secondly, he became increasingly disappointed with the Malaysian government, especially the persistence of *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship inequalities. The last straw came during the 2008 economic crisis, as he saw how the Malaysian government handled this vis-à-vis the Singapore government.

Malaysia government kept on announcing mini-budgets. I asked my parents and my brother if they got anything. “Nothing. What money?” Everyday mini-budget but where the money goes nobody knows. Whereas Singapore government has taken out the reserve fund. We have seen that Singapore government has done its very best to protect as many Singaporeans as possible. Versus the other one *lah*! So I felt in terms of security, Singapore government will think for Singaporeans first. **Regardless – the key point is regardless – whether you are new citizens or you are local-born citizens.**

Whereas the other side, even [if] you are local-born citizen, and yet sad to say, you fall under the category which is the non-*Bumiputera*.

In **S06**'s case, the realities of his family's circumstances and future lives in Singapore tipped the scales for him to take up Singapore citizenship. Although he used to think very strongly about keeping his Malaysian citizenship, this changed as he realised two things: first, his responsibilities to his family; and second, the comparative security, trust and equal treatment offered by the Singapore government to Singaporean citizens versus that of the Malaysian government to Malaysian citizens. However, even after becoming a Singapore citizen, **S06** continues to care about developments in Malaysia, and intends to contribute in his professional capacity:

If there are opportunities, whatever I gained from here ... whatever I learned, I keep telling my boss I want to build a team in Malaysia. I have built a team in Singapore. I already built a very competent team here. I want to build a same team in Malaysia.

Furthermore, **S06** realises how he was "brainwashed" to always be Malaysian:

I sang *Negaraku*<sup>105</sup> for god knows how many years. To be honest, I don't quite remember how to sing *Majulah Singapura*.<sup>106</sup> ... Before this, the reason why I told my wife not to talk about converting my Malaysian citizenship, it was also because of loyalty. **Ever since I was born, I was brainwashed to be a Malaysian.** I'm always a Malaysian. If it's not because of the economic crisis, I would still believe that Malaysia is the best!

This demonstrates the longevity of Malaysia's citizenship habitus – one never ceases to be a Malaysian at heart, even if one has chosen the exit strategy of emigration and renunciation of Malaysian citizenship.

### **Summary**

The decision to keep or renounce Malaysian citizenship is like walking a tightrope between emotional and practical considerations. For long-term overseas Malaysians with foreign PRs and/or citizenship, it is common practice to keep their Malaysian citizenship just in case. Citizenship/PR strategies are also shared through social networks. The reluctance to renounce Malaysian citizenship stems from a few factors related to Malaysia's citizenship habitus. First, citizenship is exclusive and hard to come by, especially for non-*Bumiputeras*. Second, the significance of 1969 May riots as a reminder of the possibility of racial tensions. Third, the role

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<sup>105</sup> Malaysia's national anthem.

<sup>106</sup> Singapore's national anthem.

of national education in “brainwashing” and inculcating a strong sense of national identity and loyalty. However, practicalities often prevail, especially if one’s circumstances change.

### 8.2.2 Citizenship and Loyalty

#### Voting

During interviews, I would always ask a question on citizenship as loyalty. The reason for this is to assess to what extent Malaysia’s citizenship habitus translates and impacts on mobile Malaysians’ interpretations and enactments of their Malaysian citizenship. Most of my respondents readily agree to the notion that citizenship is tied to a sense of loyalty – and in particular relation to the sense of loyalty they equate with, and attach to, their Malaysian citizenship. Paradoxically, this does not translate into active enactments of civic responsibilities, or contributions to homeland development as one would expect of diasporas who claim a yearning for their home country. Furthermore, while recent diaspora literature document long-distance nationalism and participations in homeland politics (Lyons & Mandaville, 2012), such activities are absent amongst my respondents. In fact, 40.3% of my respondents have not registered as voters (**Table 8.1**). Amongst those who are registered voters, 38.7% had not voted (12 out of 31).

**Table 8.1: Respondents’ Participation in Electoral Voting**

	Singapore	Malaysia	London/ UK	Global	Total	
Registered, voted	8	6	2	3	19	28.4%
Registered, not voted	4	4	2	2	12	17.9%
Not registered	11	5	11	0	27	40.3%
Not applicable	2	1	1	0	4	6.0%
Unknown	2	2	0	1	5	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Author

While this needs to be understood in the context of limited access to postal voting for overseas Malaysians, there are two further points to contextualise this phenomenon. First, there is a general lack political consciousness – or at least a reluctance to be partly political – amongst most of my respondents. My conversation with **G02** demonstrates this.

Author : As a Malaysian citizen, do you think that you have any expectations of the Malaysian government or Malaysia the country?

G02 : Ok, so that is another topic. Very huge topic actually. Honestly, that is a thing that I should criticize about the politics in Malaysia, which I don’t really



enjoy it honestly. I think that is something wrong about the politics in Malaysia. But I don't think I should bring in this issue. But I personally think that actually there are a lot of improvements that needs to be done in our government. You know, so ... But let's put it aside first about the politics. Your next question is about what? Can you repeat the question again?

This general practice of steering clear from politics needs to be understood in the context of Malaysia's citizenship habitus, where politics – often seen as racial politics – is a sensitive and sometimes taboo issue. As such, some may choose to steer away from any political activity to avoid “getting into trouble”. This, by extension, includes electoral voting. Clearly, the post-colonial Malaysian state's strategies of governing and educating the citizenry (**Chapter 5**) has been internalised by some mobile Malaysians.

Second, choosing not to vote is also influenced by the distrust and perceived unreciprocated “love” of the government. While many of my respondents readily admit to an emotional affiliation and belonging to “Malaysia”, some are quick to point out that their feelings do not apply to the government. Thus, there is sometimes a sense of doom and inability to effect any change, even if this is supposedly possible through political voting. As I explained in **Section 5.4**, BN – or rather, UMNO – has been equated to the Malaysian government. The sense of distrust of the government amongst mobile Malaysians must be understood in the context of race-based political representation and the continued prioritisation of *Bumiputera*-Malay interests as a kind of political strategy.

### **Loyalty to What?**

Common in my respondents' narratives is the recognition of some kind of loyalty or patriotism to Malaysia, but yet something that they cannot quite articulate or reconcile themselves with. The paradox of this unconditional loyalty vis-à-vis *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship rights and affirmative action policies appears to be equally puzzling and unexplainable for my respondents. As **S25** explains:

I don't know whether we are loyal to Malaysia or not (laughs). We always talk bad things about Malaysia but we always laugh you know. All those stupid politics, discriminating laws ... But when you talk about citizenship no one wants to actually give up. I don't know. **That's the thing, no one wants to give up!** ... Maybe because your home is there, you know, your family is there ... you grew up there, and there're things there that you want to keep.

On the one hand, **S08** is clear that his loyalty lies with the country, and *not* the government. This is evident in his answer to my question on whether he has a sense of loyalty to Malaysia.

I do, obviously I do. Otherwise I won't bother so much about what the stupid politicians say, about what they do, how they are going to screw the country, right? Very angry about it sometimes. If I'm not loyal to Malaysia, I wouldn't give a damn. So I think deep down inside I still do *lah*. But if you were to ask me whether will I give up my career, will I give up my life for it, I'm not sure *lah*, right? So the only thing is that I'm loyal to the country. But whether I'm loyal to the government, I'm not sure. At the moment I am very, very angry with the government. The Malaysian government.

Similarly for **S14**, his loyalty lies with family and social relationships rather than the government. In addition, this loyalty is derived from, and associated with the geographical place during his primary schooling years.

Loyalty, loyalty to what? To government? To country? Or ...? To me, I think we bypassed that stage already. So to me what ... whether you are loyal to ... I don't know whether we should use the term loyal. I don't know. Whenever I think of Malaysia I only think of the friends there, the family there. So if you ask me whether I have any feelings to the government or to the ... To people there, yes. To my friends. But whether I have feelings to the government or to the country ... Country of course. Because I grow up from that place. So, again we have feelings for the places that I grow up with. ... for example I brought my wife back to my primary school. Just to look around. ... I don't have feelings [for] the school, but I have feelings [for] the places [where] I spent my six years. And we also go back to my High School. So, definitely we have feelings [for] the places. Yeah, places and the people.

This reinforces my earlier point about the specific geographies grounding one's affiliation to "Malaysia". Furthermore, there is a clear separation in terms of one's affiliation to "Malaysia" the country versus "Malaysia" the government.

### **"You Love It But It Doesn't Love You Back"**

In the previous sections, I described how my respondents are aware that they sustain a sense of unexplainable loyalty that is somehow conflated with their Malaysian citizenship. In this section, I look at the cases of **L01** and **M15**, each taking a very different approach in responding to their "unrequited love". **L01** married her British husband, whom she met while furthering her studies in the UK. The couple originally intended to live permanently in Malaysia. However, difficulties in securing an employment pass and PR for her husband forced the couple to relocate to the UK. This is obviously a sore point for **L01**.

**L01** : I gave up my friends, I gave up everything. Because of the unfairness that I felt. ... they call it the brain drain, but we were brain pissed-off, you know, we couldn't stay! Immediately when his contract finished, that's it. The visa, ok, three months. They don't take into account that he's married to me, or that he's a professional. They are very harsh. Harsh and brutal. But again, it's who you know.

Author : Did he apply for PR in Malaysia?

L01 : No, he didn't. He didn't apply. I don't think it would have been [possible] ... I think now things have changed a lot. But during that time, no. ... Difficult. They won't, you know? Ok, at least here [in the UK], if by virtue of marriage, then you can still test whether it's genuine or not, isn't it? But in Malaysia they won't even go down that route of checking. Because they're worried, you know, there would be an influx of people getting married to our locals to get Malaysian nationality and all that.

Evident in L01's narrative are remnants of the frustration she and her husband must have felt at that point in time. As a *Bumiputera* Malaysian citizen, she experienced the unfairness and structural constraints imposed upon her foreign husband. Malaysia's citizenship habitus, one that is over-protective of the exclusivity accorded to "real" and "indigenous" citizens, have resulted in L01 seeking a possible family life elsewhere. To date, she is still holding her Malaysian citizenship in case she wants to return to Malaysia for retirement. She has not voted in Malaysian elections – not because she cannot, but because she chose not to. She is wary of her political associations, if any, affecting her extended family members who are still living in Malaysia. This is because she feels that in Malaysia one needs to be careful about one's speech and actions.

M15, on the other hand, takes a different response. Instead of choosing to exit or washing his hands of political citizenship, he takes the position that one has the choice to fight the battle. He and his family have lived for some time in Singapore, and he was considering taking up Singapore citizenship previously. He and his wife eventually decided to return to Malaysia for a number of reasons. As he explains in his reply to my question on whether he is proud of Malaysia:

Um, I think so. Eh, but, you see, I didn't answer you straight away (laughs). This ... this pride is ... It's funny. ... In the past, I felt [that] the country has let us down. **It's like, you know, you love it but it never love you back.** That kind of very funny situation. But through the 2008 [elections], the outcome, and also talking to people, it is my realisation that actually it is up to us, you know? If you want to feel proud about it, it's you. There's no so-called conditions [that] must be in place ... It's your call, basically. No matter how terrible the situation could be, you can still feel proud of it, if you want to.

And, then that leads to the next question: Do you want to pick and choose so-called – I put it in rather strong words – to fight the battle? You cannot always pick a very nice battleground and then fight it there. ... So yeah, it is tough, and sometimes still looks quite hopeless. But at least no matter what the outcome is, you have done your part. And that's it. Give it a good fight, right? ....

So actually in late 2008 when we were considering applying for Singapore citizenship, I was telling myself: my kids probably are better off to be Singaporean. But maybe I leave it to myself to continue to fight there [from Singapore]. Although I will lose a very big moral high ground, you know, by doing so. But I think that is then only a question of

myself, you know? Not about my family. Although my children are a big part of me. That's when I face this harsh reality that I have to draw that line. I have to be the one who has to face whatever consequences, and not my kids. I should not drag them into that.

That's why even today, sometimes my wife still complains, "Why must you drag your kids through this kind of thing?" But I think slowly now, she see that yeah, it's a good process to put them through. At least there is certain bottom line that we will not breach. Bottom line could be like: they have to be safe, and they are not at a great loss of getting decent education. That's all. So I'm always still very mindful about that part *lah*. So that is still always, there is this view that anytime if things has gone terribly wrong, we have to abort again and then switch back.

**M15** has "defied" the normal culture of migration from Malaysia to Singapore, and instead chose to relocate his family back to Malaysia. In doing so, he has been facing a lot of social pressures – a friend even commented that he is violating his children's human rights by depriving them of better quality education in Singapore. However, his choice to return is motivated by two factors: first, choosing Malaysia as his "battle ground" in advancing political consciousness; and second, offering his children a balanced growing-up environment in Malaysia. As he elaborates:

Maybe that is part of us, you know? That's how we have grown up. There are times when it's like so hopeless. But you grow up from that hopelessness. And that process somehow also gives you some strength. And you have to find your own way. Nobody is going to take care of your life. And maybe, somehow, that is also what I feel our kids should have. Rather than being in a completely comfortable environment *lah*.

Although **M15** recognises that his love for Malaysia is unrequited, he has chosen to exercise his agency in "staying" and fighting the battle for a better Malaysia. However, it remains to be seen if his children will follow the culture of migrating for education when they reach their higher education years.

### **Obligations versus Distrust**

Citizenship has been generally understood as a formal contract between the state and the citizen. The former confers membership and rights, while the latter fulfils obligations in return. In Malaysia's case, however, obligations are differentially interpreted because of two reasons: firstly, citizenship is differentiated by *Bumiputera* status; and secondly and consequently, there is a sense of distrust of the government. This has resulted in negative sentiments towards government initiatives as an almost *automatic* response, as evident in **M06**'s narrative below.

I heard from my friend, a Malay, that most of the Malays enter government-linked companies. He told me that actually it is very difficult for Chinese to get in. He said that when he wants to recruit, he will tell his human resource (HR) people his headcount

and requirements. Then HR does the first filter. So by the time the candidates get to his level to be interviewed, there are no non-*Bumiputeras*.

So he said that he thinks there are policies in place. They [i.e. the government] say there are no such policies, but it's all bullshit. My friend is a Malay, and even he tells me that it's like this. So for him to hire it's also very difficult. He needs people with certain qualifications, experience, attitudes, but sometimes the candidates are not up to expectations. It's all bullshit *lah*, the government. Asking people to come home and contribute. I read in the newspapers, the [government official], when he went overseas, some overseas Malaysians ask him what their salaries would be if they returned. His answer is: "Why don't you go back first and see the situation? You have left for a long time. You don't know what the current job market is like. Why don't you come back first?" Are you mad? I don't have a job [in Malaysia], asking me to just go back first, giving up my job overseas? Of course I will only come back with a guaranteed position.

When asked about whether she has heard of Malaysia's return migration programmes, **M06** replied:

But I don't know what they do. They target high profile people like scientists, doctors, very experienced people like those university professors in Singapore. I don't know if they target only those kinds of people. Because they will never contact people like me. I'm just a normal person like everyone else. The programmes ... No effect on me at all. No impact at all. So I don't know what the government does actually. Or maybe people like me are not really important to them. What level would we be? We are not junior, not senior, not middle management. That's why there were a lot of people like me in Singapore. If we come back, what actions will the government take? Nothing. Did they take any action that really made people like us stay back? No.

The two excerpts from **M06's** narrative demonstrate the level of embedded distrust she has for the Malaysian government. Furthermore, this distrust is immediately transferred to negative perceptions towards any new initiatives and programmes introduced by the government. From the perspectives of mobile Malaysians who were in some ways "forced" to leave Malaysia due to structural constraints derived from the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship, responding to the government's calls for their citizenry obligations may never be a priority.

### **"It Doesn't Matter What You Feel"**

Distrust of the government is also interlinked with perceptions and experiences of *Bumiputera*-differentiation. **S27** graduated from a UK university as part of a twinning programme. After graduation, he returned to Malaysia and worked for a large corporation, where he experienced the effects of *Bumiputera*-differentiated affirmative action policies in his day-to-day work life. The experiences appear to have affected his trust in citizenship as a contract between government and citizen.

- Author : In your case, what do you feel your Malaysian citizenship is?
- S27 : That is a landmine *lah*. That is a huge landmine. Because it changes according to admin one, you know?
- Author : What do you mean?
- S27 : Mahathir say like that *mah*<sup>107</sup> like that *lor*.<sup>108</sup> Then Badawi say like that *mah* like that *lor*. Then Najib say like it's like that *lor*.<sup>109</sup>
- Author : To you?
- S27 : (raises voice) Does it matter? How I feel, does it matter? It does not matter, you see. Who cares about me? Who cares about both of us, for that matter? Nobody cares one *lah* (in resigned tone). At least they don't care *lah*, I can tell you that they don't care. They will probably be nice to you *lah*, when they need your votes *lah*.
- ...
- Like when I was [younger], I was always wondering: 为什么这么多华人往海外跑? 长大了自己变成难民我终于明白 (laughs) [lit. "Why do so many Chinese migrate overseas? I finally understood this when I grew up and became a "refugee"]. I wouldn't call myself a refugee *lah*, you know. But we are caught in a very uneasy land *lah*. And it's not very easy to straddle ... Like ... you go to government office, you don't speak Malay you get the cold shoulder, you know? I mean, it's tough *lah*. And it just gets worse and worse. ... I mean, based on my personal experience at [Corporation X] ...
- ...
- I just think that what we feel is not important. Citizenship, what is citizenship? It's the passport, the I/C. .... But the thing is, fundamentally you are still different ... you are still known as a Chinese. It's only when you go out of Malaysia that they call you: "Oh, Malaysian", because then you get to hang out with all the Malays. Malaysian Society. Once you go home, things will be different. "Oh, Chinese girl. Oh, Malay boy." You know, that kind of thing?

S27's narrative demonstrates the awareness that *Bumiputera*-differentiation is a real and structuring factor. More importantly, this awareness has resulted in a sense of defeat and inevitable acceptance that this will not change because what really matters is the decision made by the political elites.

### **Summary**

Although my respondents readily admit to having a strong sense of loyalty to "Malaysia", they are clear in pointing out that the loyalty lies with their hometown, family, friends, or country. Loyalty *never* lies with the Malaysian government. It is as if Malaysia "the nation-state" or "the

<sup>107</sup> Colloquial term often used by local Chinese. Could mean "then it's ...".

<sup>108</sup> Colloquial term used in a similar way as "lah".

<sup>109</sup> Names refer to Malaysia's prime ministers: "Mahathir" the fourth prime minister; "Badawi" the fifth prime minister; and "Najib" the current prime minister.

country” has been conflated with Malaysia “the government”. Thus, there exists a kind of love-hate relationship, at least in the minds of mobile Malaysians. However, there are two types of reactions: choosing to exit (e.g. emigration, not returning, not participating); or choosing to fight the battle.

### **8.3 Discussion**

In this chapter, I examined mobile Malaysian’s interpretations and practices of citizenship strategies. My findings are twofold. First, my respondents associate their Malaysian citizenship with primordial and emotional meanings which may or may not be attached to the country, but are nevertheless conflated and articulated as such. The primordial, however, is actually attached to one’s *kampong* and/or an imagined ethno-national community. Furthermore, one’s ethno-national affiliation appears to be influenced by one’s education stream. Second, citizenship is practised and strategised in relation to intertwined and sometimes paradoxical concepts of security and loyalty. Significantly, despite claims of loyalty to “Malaysia” and strong desires to retain Malaysian citizenship, civic/political voting is not a common practice. In what follows, I discuss my findings in relation to Malaysia’s citizenship habitus.

#### **8.3.1 Unpacking Loyalty and the Primordial**

Prior to commencing this research, I noticed that loyalty is a recurrent theme in state-led discourse and everyday life understandings of citizenship and emigration in Malaysia. My respondents’ narratives suggest that loyalty is indeed significant in their interpretations and practices of citizenship. However, “loyalty” is differentially understood, articulated and practised in nuanced and paradoxical ways. Crucially, this “loyalty” departs from, and challenges state-led constructions of a de-racialised, pan-Malaysian national affiliation.

First, while mobile Malaysians conceptualise their Malaysian citizenship in relation to “loyalty to Malaysia”, the “Malaysia” that their loyalty lies with is actually a combination of many things that are not necessarily “Malaysia the nation-state” or “Malaysia the country”. Instead, the “Malaysia” that their loyalty lies with include sub-national geographies of origin (e.g. *kampong*), the presence of family members and social network in Malaysia, nostalgic memories of living in Malaysia associated with a significant part of their life stage (e.g. **L12**’s fond memories of college life and visiting *mamaks*), and an ethno-national sense of pride (e.g. **S05**’s narrative about the Malaysian-Chinese).

This corresponds with Samers' (2010, p. 283) observation that "what we might mistake for distinctly transnational practices and spaces may actually be ones of also locality, kinship, family relations, and gender". This also concurs with Conradson and McKay's (2007) conceptualisation of migrants' "translocal subjectivity" as "more closely related to localities within nations than to nation-states" (p. 169). Furthermore, mobile Malaysians' sense of loyalty, primarily attached to locality and kinship, looms large in their imagined hopes for a future return to Malaysia – and the reason they keep their Malaysian citizenship "just in case". As Smith (2011: p. 190) notes, "coming home" for migrants is actually "a return to the symbolism and materiality of 'domestic home spaces' – specific houses, pieces of land, loved ones, cherished spaces and places of previously transnational families."

However, what is more interesting in the Malaysian case is that both the symbolic materiality of "home" *and* the act of return are equated to "loyalty" and "retention of citizenship". Analysed through the lens of citizenship habitus, we can understand such behaviours as mobile Malaysians' internalised disposition about the meanings of their Malaysian citizenship. As a result of the historicity of citizenship constitution, Malaysian citizenship is understood as a status that is difficult to come by, conflated with national identity, and deeply embedded with notions of national loyalty (**Sections 4.3.3 and 5.2**). This enables an understanding of how and why mobile Malaysians articulate their Malaysian citizenship through the concept of "loyalty", even though this could be more accurately described as ties to locality and kinship.

Second, this sense of "loyalty" translates into mobile Malaysians' dichotomised view of their Malaysian citizenship vis-à-vis other citizenship and PR statuses. While the former is viewed with emotional significance, the latter are predominantly considered with pragmatism. Here, again, the concept of citizenship habitus offers an explanatory lens. As a result of the post-colonial Malaysian state's national education efforts (e.g. **S06's** explanation of being "brainwashed to be a Malaysian"), as well as internalised understandings passed on by their parents, mobile Malaysians grow up with a strong sense of being Malaysian.

Furthermore, my respondents seem to automatically equate their Malaysian identity to their Malaysian citizenship. This can be understood in the context of the historicity of citizenship in colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia, where citizenship has been constituted as one that is conferred through a qualified *jus soli* principle (i.e. by birth and descent). This has led to my respondents' conceptualisation of their Malaysian citizenship as primordial (e.g. **L04's** "umbilical cord") and emblematic of their personal identity and belonging. Thus, theirs is not necessarily a flexible citizenship strategy (Ong, 1999), but instead this is because it is



unfathomable for my respondents to give up Malaysian citizenship – *their* identity – for another.

Third, some of my respondents easily and automatically equate their Malaysian identity – conflated with citizenship – with an ethno-national identity. Such ethno-national identities are also conceptualised as a kind of in-born, primordial identity with certain characteristics. For example, Malaysians (including the Malaysian-Chinese) are conceptualised as “good-natured”, tolerant, competitively advantaged, and able to survive anywhere in the world due to the limitations they experienced in Malaysia. Furthermore, there is a sense of pride in identifying themselves as Malaysian (and Malaysian-Chinese) vis-à-vis “others”.

Such essentialised understandings of an “imagined community” (B. Anderson, 2006) suggest a kind of “racialised ethnicity”, which Kivisto and Croll (2012: p. 12) define as “socially created and embedded notions about group differences predicated on observable physiological differences that are defined as having consequences for innate ability, moral character, and persistent inequality”. However, the problem is that “[o]nce cultural identity is claimed, one faces the responsibilities, obligations, and demands for loyalty and existential authenticity” (Yao, 2009, p. 259). In other words, racialised essentialism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as “Malaysians” and “Malaysian-Chinese” reinforce boundaries between “us” and “them”.

Crucially, the specific education streams my respondents go through seem to shape their relative affiliations to either an essentialised ethno-national identity (e.g. those educated in national-type schools) or a more pan-Malaysian identity with accommodative views of race-based affirmative action policies (e.g. those educated in national schools). This highlights the significance of Malaysia’s education system in perpetuating inherited colonial legacies of racial ideology. In particular, the Malaysian-Chinese community “produces ‘ethnic citizens’ nurtured through a Mandarin-based educational and cultural system ... preserving a Chinese element to Malaysian nationhood” (Hwang & Sadiq, 2010: p. 209).

According to Sai (2013: p. 50), education was “a privileged site” for colonial nationalism and multiculturalism orchestrated by the British colonial administration in Malaya and Singapore. She further argues that “[a]n obvious lacuna in existing literature on nationalism is neglect of the role played by the coloniser in fostering nationalistic belonging to the putative nation” (p. 49). Indeed, my argument in this thesis is that British colonial legacies inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state influence mobile Malaysians’ citizenship practices. In this case, it is a divisive education system broadly stratified along racial lines that

continue to perpetuate racial divisions, at the same time that a de-racialised and de-politicised multicultural nationalism informs mobile Malaysians' understandings of citizenship, national identity and loyalty in a post-colonial, multi-ethnic context.

### 8.3.2 *Unpacking Security and Distrust*

Another component to mobile Malaysians' retention of their Malaysian citizenship is their desire for security. However, "security" needs to be unpacked. First, "security" is equated to a guaranteed possibility of returning to Malaysia in the future. Thus, all efforts are made to prevent the need to renounce Malaysian citizenship while accumulating other citizenship and PR statuses. **S25's** account of mobile Malaysians in Australia, for example, show how they strategically plan their migration geographies in accordance with the exact number of years required to retain Australian PR. Such strategies, however, coexist paradoxically with mobile Malaysians' awareness that they actually do not desire to return to Malaysia. Security, in this sense, is an excuse for a nostalgic hope one may not actively seek to realise, and not necessarily a conscious agenda to "bypass or exploit citizenship rules" (Ong, 1999, p. 113).

Second, "security" is understood as hedging against perceived threats of racial discrimination, particularly amongst some of my Malaysian-Chinese respondents. **L11's** desire for "a spare citizenship", for example, was explained in relation to the May 1969 riots and how "it's impossible for Chinese people to get citizenship under the current system". "Security" in this instance needs to be contextualised to the racialised nature of Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship, as well as the constant evocation of the May 1969 event as a warning against possible racially-induced incidents in the future. This echoes Ong's (1996) concept of "cultural citizenship" as "a dual process of self-making and being-made" (p. 738) in relation to state-led processes, although her argument pertains to how minority immigrants are racially produced and reproduced under Western liberal ideologies.

Additionally, "security" in mobile Malaysians' citizenship interpretations and practices needs to be contextualised within their general sense of distrust of the Malaysian government, which has been equated to "the Malays" and/or "UMNO/BN". Although citizenship is normatively understood as access to civic/political rights, as well as the state's responsibility to its citizenry, such interpretations are uncommon for my respondents. Most have not registered and/or participated in electoral voting, nor do they seem to believe in the possibility of social change through engagement with politics (with the exception of **M15**). Such behaviours can be understood in relation to three interrelated factors: first, state-led constructions and everyday

understandings of Malaysian citizenship as a form of cultural belonging; second, problems with Malaysia's electoral system and unequal overseas voting rights; and third, the grudging resignation that Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship cannot be changed or removed, at least under the current constitution. Thus, citizenship as security is pursued because the government is not trusted to be responsible and equitable to its citizenry.

### 8.3.3 Contextualising Understandings of Citizenship

At first glance, the notions of loyalty, primordial, security and distrust tied to the Malaysian citizenship could be explained using Ho's concept of emotional citizenship. In particular, my respondents' attachment to kinship and non-participation in civic/political acts fit Ho's (2009, p. 797) observation that "the emotional attachment that individuals speak of might not take the form of political belonging; instead belonging is anchored in the family unit". Furthermore, Ho (2008, p. 6) argues that little is known about how migrants' emotions "propel or hinder political action". In the case of mobile Malaysians, paradoxical and intertwined emotional triggers of loyalty, security and distrust do provide a way in to understand their citizenship interpretations and practices.

However, I argue that Ho's emotional citizenship offers only a partial explanation. More importantly, I am wary of emphasising the emotional, as this obscures a more important structural factor – the longevity of colonial legacies, particularly in post-colonial, multi-ethnic contexts. Thus, I chose instead to emphasise a postcolonial approach grounded in the historicity of citizenship to advance a historically-informed understanding of how and why a citizenry interprets and carries out certain citizenship practices in relation to its migration geographies. In my approach, the emotional – *and* the habitual – are windows through which to expose the workings of long-lasting legacies of colonialism on contemporary migration.

In the context of post-colonial nation-state, I agree with Ho's (2008, p.11) observation:

*The relationship between the state, citizen and migrant in non-Western societies may not be easily defined by conventional categories of Western citizenship, particularly in the context of postcolonial nation-states – such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – that have seen migrants from yesteryear naturalise in the post-independence period to become citizens, but who are now in a heated contest for citizenship rights with new migrants.*

She further argues for "a culturally sensitive way of understanding citizenship ... both as a subject of enquiry and as a mode of analysis (or way of understanding the world)". Ho's insights point to my argument for a citizenship habitus – in this case, for Malaysia – that

contextualises the interpretations, meanings and practices of citizenship (and migration) of a particular group of people.

In his study of the Chinese in Malaysia, Nonini (1997, p. 204) concludes that “[t]ransnational practices of modern Chinese persons cannot be understood separately from the cultural politics of identities inscribed on them by such regimes in the spaces they traverse and reside in.” In this chapter, I have shown that while this remains true, there are also diversities within the general category of “the Malaysian-Chinese”. In particular, education stream and the associated experiences appear to influence my respondents’ understandings of “Malaysia” and how that relates to their Malaysian citizenship. Furthermore, this also has implications for their attitudes towards *Bumiputera* policies and practices of citizenship to some extent.

Here, I am reminded of Staeheli et al.’s (2012, p. 640) insight:

*The citizenship of daily life is not simply constrained by law, but instead fuses law with abstract norms and the behaviors, relationships, and interactions of daily life. These interactions and encounters can lead to conflict, othering, and exclusion, but they can also lead to feelings of conviviality, to understanding, to belonging, to obligation, or to simply getting on with each other.*

As a consequence of colonial legacies exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state, “government” has been conflated with “the ruling coalition”, i.e. BN led by UMNO. In addition, “race” has been sensitised in the name of national unity. Thus, my respondents conflate their feelings of loyalty, affiliation, national pride, distrust, and anger with “Malaysia” in their myriad interpretations. In this way, one can sustain feelings of perpetual belonging to “Malaysia” as home (e.g. family, hometown, growing-up experiences), at the same time that one adopts feelings of distrust to “Malaysia” the government.<sup>110</sup>

While feelings of conviviality with “the other” may occur, especially in overseas migration settings, I argue that in the Malaysian case, migration *also* perpetuates existing social stratifications which have been inherited as colonial legacies. In other words, race as colonial legacy initiates, and is in turn perpetuated by, mobile Malaysians’ culture of migration. Taken altogether, I argue that the real impact of colonial legacies lies in the internalised citizenship habitus that continues to circumscribe citizenship and migration behaviours of generations after the end of the colonial period. This is what I call the longevity of British colonial legacies.

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<sup>110</sup> I develop this in Koh (forthcoming).

## **PART IV – CLOSING THE STAGE**

## CHAPTER 9. Conclusion

My research started with two interrelated questions: *What are mobile Malaysians' migration geographies, and how did these come about? What are mobile Malaysians' citizenship and migration practices, and how and why are these carried out?* My hypothesis is that these questions can be explained by adopting a postcolonial lens on the historicity of citizenship in colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia, which I operationalised using my proposed concept of citizenship habitus. Drawing from emergent calls for postcolonial approaches to migration studies (Mains et al., 2013), my aim is to identify theoretical implications for migration and citizenship studies, and policy implications for Malaysia specifically, and emigration states generally.

In **Part II**, I drew predominantly from archival sources and showed how the historicity of Malaysia's *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship led to race-based affirmative action policies, with particular effects on education, migration and social mobility. In **Part III**, I drew predominantly from interview conversations and traced my mobile Malaysian respondents' migration geographies. Through this, I showed how they become incorporated into a culture of education-led and racialised migration, as well as how they interpreted and carried out certain citizenship and migration practices.

In terms of *migration geographies*, I showed the normalcy of migration/mobility (**Chapter 6**) and discussed mobile Malaysians' culture of migration in relation to three themes (**Chapter 7**). The first recognises the geographical nature of this culture of migration, particularly with respect to connections and temporalities of place(s). The second argues that this culture of migration cannot be understood simplistically as flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999) or accumulation of educational capital (Waters 2006, 2008) without contextualising this within the historicity of citizenship. This relates to the third point, which identifies the importance of Malaysia's education system – an inherited colonial legacy – in initiating and perpetuating this culture of migration.

In terms of *citizenship and migration practices*, I identified and discussed mobile Malaysians' citizenship interpretations through the concepts of loyalty, the primordial, security, and distrust (**Chapter 8**). I argued that Ho's (2009) emotional citizenship provides a partial explanation, and that the emotional and habitual must be contextualised within a postcolonial understanding of how and why a citizenry interpret and enact citizenship in peculiar ways.

## 9.1 Contributions

### 9.1.1 Postcolonial Approach to Migration

My thesis adopts a postcolonial approach to contemporary migration practices. As I have argued in **Section 1.4.1**, a postcolonial approach advances migration studies in four ways by enabling: first, an examination of the interactions between structural forces and migrants' interpretations of those structural forces; second, a view to "the colonial present" (Gregory, 2004) without engaging only in historiography; third, a contextualised understanding of key migration concepts which departs from, and challenges, Anglo-Western experiences; and fourth, the voicing of non-mainstream and bottom-up perspectives. As Nair (2013, p. 2456) puts it, a postcolonial approach to migration highlights "sociopolitical issues affecting the marginal as seen from their point of view" – although in this case the "marginal" happens to be transnational skilled migrants.

Specifically, my research on mobile Malaysians' culture of migration contributes towards postcolonial geography, migration and citizenship studies by highlighting: firstly, how legacies of colonialism initiate, facilitate and propagate migration; secondly, how certain colonial-institutionalised beliefs – of race, the value of education, and state-citizen relationship – are carried into migration; and thirdly, how these beliefs are subsequently translated into citizenship and migration practices. By drawing the link between British colonial legacies and contemporary individual and collective citizenship and migration practices, I draw attention to four points for migration research generally, and skilled migration specifically.

### Race

First, there is a need to examine how race matters to migration. This goes beyond well-documented discussions on immigrant integration/assimilation, or discrimination/inequality experienced by minority immigrants (e.g. Dwyer, 2000; Marranci, 2011; see also Das Gupta, 2013). Instead, I wish to highlight the role race plays in circumscribing *migration flows* (not just immigration, but also of emigration, student-migration, return migration, etc.) and *migration experiences* before, during, and after acts of migration. My research has shown explicitly how race matters to Malaysia's culture of migration: firstly, in initiating and perpetuating specific migration geographies; and secondly, in influencing migrants' citizenship and migration practices – with consequences for geographical mobility and state-citizen relationships.

As Winders (2009) notes, “geographical scholarship tends either to ‘document’ racial patterns ... or ‘analyze’ race’s meanings ... with little interaction across this divide” (p. 56). Thus it is important to integrate *descriptions* and *meanings* of race by examining how “[r]ace works geographically” (p. 54). Given the long history of geography’s engagement with race (Bonnett, 1996), I argue that geographers are well-placed to interrogate and map out the workings of race vis-à-vis migration geographies. King (2012) has previously identified geographers’ existing and potential contributions to migration studies, particularly through examining cultural geography, gender, and mobilities. Building on this, I argue that by focusing on race, geographers have much to contribute towards challenging existing understandings of migration and the implicit discourses, including “the ways in which migrant bodies ... become the nexus points for spatial practices across many scales” (Mains et al., 2013, p. 132).

### **History**

Second, there is a need to extend the temporal lens historically in order to gain a fuller picture of how and why skilled migrants carry out certain citizenship and migration practices, including what appears to be flexible citizenship strategies. This is particularly crucial in understanding migration phenomena in post-colonial, multi-ethnic contexts. For example, through a historically-informed analytical lens, we can better understand “family migration capital” beyond the mere “pass-through of parents’ and grandparents’ past migration experience onto their descendants’ attitudes towards emigration” (Ivlevs & King, 2010, p. 119) and/or household capital accumulation. Instead, “family migration capital” can be clearly seen as migrants’ citizenship habitus – internalised practices as a reaction to historically-developed structural constraints. This also enables an understanding of how and why a culture of migration exists in a particular context.

Contextualising a culture of migration which *makes* transnational skilled migrants historically is important because this challenges the divisive categorisation of migrants and typologies of migrations (e.g. student, marriage, skilled). On the one hand, this coincides with recent studies showing the link between student-migration and skilled migration (Baas, 2011; Liu-Farrer, 2012). On the other hand, and more importantly, this advances skilled migration studies by highlighting the need to integrate internal and international migration (see King & Skeldon, 2010) in relation to migrants’ whole life trajectory. My research has shown how internal and international migration are intertwined in the pursuit of education and social mobility, and how this subsequently contributes towards the making of mobile Malaysians. Crucially, this



culture of education-led migration can be better understood when contextualised within colonial legacies of race and education as social mobility.

### **Contextualised Meanings**

Third, and relatedly, migration research must interrogate the concepts of “citizenship” and “migration”, with special attention to their meanings in specific emigration contexts, and not to assume *a priori* that these concepts take the same meaning and significance as in the Western liberal context. In the Malaysian case, my research has shown: firstly, how and why “citizenship” has been conflated with nationality and national loyalty in colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia; and secondly, how and why “migration” is understood as mobility that is a normal part of mobile Malaysians’ lives and their family histories. Thus, migration is circular, flexible in type and duration; while “Malaysia” – symbolised by the Malaysian citizenship – is the perpetual home grounding “primordial” loyalties and migration geographies. More importantly, race is a significant stratifying factor in this respect, affecting the varied and differentiated ways mobile Malaysians interpret and practise their citizenship(s) as identity, membership and rights.

My point here builds upon Miller’s (2011b, p. 801) call for scholars to consider “particular localised conditions and circumstances ... in navigating [ethnic minority’s] relationship with nationality and citizenship” (p. 801). While her observation refers specifically to theorisations of “citizenship”, I argue that equal attention must be given to contextualised meanings of “migration”, as this sheds light on how migrants from particular contexts interpret, carry out, and rationalise their migration geographies. One way would be to interrogate the meaning(s) of “migration” in local languages and epistemologies. As Wang (1985, p. 54) suggests, the Malay word “*merantau*” (lit. “wandering”) captures the spirit of migratory mobility which “is still with us and pervades ... modern manifestations of elite and professional mobility across national boundaries, just as it guided ambitious and adventurous young men in the past”.

In sum, “citizenship” and “migration” are intertwined in complex and racialised ways – not just in Malaysia or other post-colonial countries – and must be analysed contextually as such. Abstracting this to a broader theoretical level, this means that contextualised understandings of “citizenship” and “migration” need to be interrogated *together* in order to comprehend how and why migrations occur in certain ways in particular contexts.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> While my point here relates specifically to migration-related knowledge, my purpose is to highlight a broader concern with the politics of knowledge production in the social sciences, which continues to be

**Methodological Nationalism**

This leads on to my fourth point: contrary to Wimmer and Glick Schiller's (2003) criticism of methodological nationalism for "naturalising the nation-state" (p. 580) and uncritically perpetuating "territorial limitation" (p.578) in research strategies, we need to acknowledge that it is sometimes appropriate to take the nation-state as a starting point of analysis in understanding migration, especially in post-colonial contexts. This is because concepts of citizenship, national identity and loyalty are made pertinent in these contexts – as a result of post-colonial nation-state formations – in relation to migration. Here, the "national" circumscribes post-colonial migration mobilities: firstly, through citizenship and immigration policies with implicit notions of national loyalty; and secondly, through a particular citizenship habitus migrants carry into a culture of migration.

In putting forth this suggestion, I concur with Brubaker's (2004) use of "nation" as a *tool* rather than an object of analysis. This is not a case of taking the nation-state as a default unit of analysis, or limiting the study of migration within a nation-state boundary. Rather, my suggested approach acknowledges the continued salience of the "nation" as a source of power in circumscribing how migration/mobility pans out – transnationally, regionally, or locally. As my research shows, although this approach starts with "the nation", it ultimately interrogates "the nation" and contributes towards a nuanced understanding of what "the nation" means to people who constitute "the nation".

Taking a particular "nation" as a starting point for analysis does not neglect other forces beyond the "national" that come into play. Instead, this approach recognises the significance of that "nation" as a *relatively and subjectively* more significant force vis-à-vis other forces such as the global economy, as well as citizenship and immigration regimes of other nation-states – at least understood from the perspectives of citizens/migrants. For example, my research suggests that my respondents accord more emotional significance to "Malaysia" and "Malaysian citizenship", compared to other citizenship and PR statuses. Contextualising this to a postcolonial reading of Malaysia's citizenship habitus offers an understanding of how and why the "nation" continues to matter to migrants' citizenship and migration practices.

Crucially, my suggestion to use the "nation" as a tool of analysis is complemented by a multi-sited transnational migration methodology which entails following and mapping (Marcus, 1995)

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circumscribed and delimited by Eurocentrism and colonial legacies. This ambition goes beyond the limitations of this thesis, but is nevertheless a long-term quest I am committed to pursue.

migrants and their migration geographies. This focuses the study on migrants as social agents by “disclos[ing] ways in which spatial frameworks and boundaries are formed by actors” (Amelina & Faist, 2012, p. 1715). In doing so, the “nation” is shown to be complexly intertwined with migrants and their migration geographies.

### **9.1.2 History and the Contemporary**

My methodological strategy for this research is to use history (through archival research) as a lens to understand contemporary migration phenomena (through interview-conversations and my personal reflections). My usage of primary archival sources, as opposed to complete reliance on secondary historical research, is methodologically important. This is because reading archival documents first hand accords a more intimate understanding of history at the personal level. It is important to note that I returned to archival research a second time *after* completing interview-conversations and some preliminary analysis. My methodological journey has been one that traversed the historical and the contemporary. Through this back-and-forth travel through time and space, I gained a reflexive perspective that enabled me to be in a better position to understand and interpret the research data.

As I am both a product of, and a reflexive challenger of Malaysia’s citizenship habitus, this reflexive reading of colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysian history has been instrumental in developing my theoretical and empirical interpretation of this research. For example, my reading of British colonial officers’ reports in the archives inspired feelings of anger and injustice about the long-lasting effects of colonialism on Malaysia’s contemporary migration. This steered me to interpret my respondents’ culture of migration as a consequence of British colonial legacies inherited and exacerbated by the post-colonial Malaysian state. More importantly, the feeling of injustice compelled me to theorise mobile Malaysians’ migration through a postcolonial analysis, which enabled me to speak to the literature about colonialism, race, and migration. Crucially, mine was not an individual and subjective motivation, but one which coincides with others before me (e.g. Mains et al., 2013).

I have yet to come across literature discussing the use of archival research and qualitative interviews as methodology for migration studies. An exception is Fitzgerald’s (2006) suggestion to use local archival work and ethnography through the extended case method as a way to theorise migration ethnography. As he suggests, “[f]ollowing migrants through their trajectory ... in an ethnographically and historically sensitive way is the best means to untangle the dynamics of ethnic genesis, retention, and dissolution” (p. 18). While our methodological

suggestions are similar, there is a key difference in our purpose: Fitzgerald is concerned with a methodological problem for migration ethnography, while I am primarily concerned with a theoretical problem for migration. Thus, my suggestion for interweaving history and the contemporary *methodologically* serves a broader purpose, which is to advance the understanding of migration *theoretically*.

## **9.2 Policy Implications**

### **9.2.1 Return Migration and (Bumiputera-Differentiated) Citizenship**

My research has shown that Malaysia's culture of migration must be discussed together with the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and pro-*Bumiputera* affirmative action policies. In particular, I have gone beyond existing academic literature and policy interventions which often stop short at linking the New Economic Policy (NEP) to emigration. Instead, I have extended the temporal lens backwards and forwards by looking at what happens before and after emigration. My research thus draws attention to the following questions: How do migration experiences (including of education-migration) of those who migrated (as direct and/or indirect consequences of NEP) affect their subsequent citizenship and migration pathways? What does this mean for return migration policies?

Malaysia is now focusing on developing itself as a talent destination. However, without addressing its *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship policies and structural constraints in education and employment, it would be naïve to think that isolated policies such as the Returning Expert Programme (REP) can result in significant reversals in Malaysia's culture of migration. As it currently stands, the REP is catered to a select target group of overseas Malaysians, and excludes those who are qualified but may not meet its eligibility criteria. Moreover, the REP is *not* the obstacle preventing return migration. It is the distrust and lack of confidence in the future of the country under the direction of the Malaysian government that is preventing mobile Malaysians from even considering the very idea of return.

This highlights two points for return migration policies generally, and for Malaysia's return migration project specifically. First, return migration policies should ideally be designed bearing in mind the policies which have initiated emigration in the first place. This includes citizenship and education policies, as well as issues of race and minority rights. In the Malaysian context, this means interrogating the relationships between *Bumiputera*-

differentiated citizenship rights and affirmative action policies to the migration geographies of people who eventually become mobile Malaysians.

Second, policymakers must be aware of the historicity of state-citizen relationship, and how that impacts upon emigrants' perceptions to return migration policies. My findings suggest that mobile Malaysians tend to view the Malaysian government and government policies with distrust. Furthermore, they automatically assumed that it is undesirable to return because they will experience racial discrimination, although such perceptions are mostly uncritically reflected upon. Exceptions are those who have experienced working and/or adult life in Malaysia, which seems to have facilitated their return migration. This highlights a preliminary observation with potential to inform policy: the significance of emigrants' duration of stay in the origin context prior to emigration in influencing their propensity to return.

### **9.2.2 Looking Beyond "Race": Education Reform**

In 1946, Professor Silcock, who was Chair in Economics at the University of Malaya in Singapore from 1938 to 1959, made a strong argument against the institutionalisation of race in Malaya. As he argues (Silcock, 1961, p. 12):

*It should not be possible for any resident in Malaya to pass through a year without at least once being reminded, by filling in a form, voting, registering, making a report, or in one of the other numerous ways in which every individual comes in contact with government, that he either is or is not a citizen, an actual member of the community. On the other hand he should never, unless it is a matter of really vital urgency, be required to state his race on any form or application. Every effort should be made to impress on people continuously that race is a purely private, cultural matter, and politically unimportant, and that the important thing politically is citizenship.*

Unfortunately, his warning had not been able to influence policies as the newly-independent Malaysian state grappled with ethno-politics, threats of communism, and electoral politics. Race, translated into the *Bumiputera*-differentiated citizenship and affirmative action policies, has become the differentiating factor in the social stratification of Malaysian society. Race defines, divides, and differentiates Malaysians of various ethnic origins.

More importantly, race has also been translated into education streams, which further stratify the Malaysian population in terms of their access to resources and capabilities for social mobility. As Hirschman (1995, p. 34) noted, "[o]nce racism is institutionalized, it can be perpetuated even after the conditions that created it have changed." This begs a question: would it be possible to reverse the accumulated effects of racial categorisation in Malaysia? If it is possible, how can this be achieved?

My research has suggested that education is a significant factor in perpetuating two interrelated processes: firstly, race-based social stratification; and secondly, migration geographies amongst mobile Malaysians. This suggests that a way in to tackle the issue is through reforms of the education system.<sup>112</sup> However, past efforts have shown us that unification of the education system based on one national language/culture – by default the Malay language/culture – has not been satisfactory as non-Malay cultural communities fought to maintain their respective cultural heritage. Thus, education reform is a long process that must be also complemented by better *inter- and intra-ethnic/cultural* communication and understanding.

### 9.3 Limitations

#### Specific or Generalisable?

My research has focused on the specific case of Malaysia and British colonialism in late-19th to mid-20th century. While some aspects of British colonialism may be similarly experienced in other Commonwealth countries (e.g. India), there are also Malaysia-specific geographies and historicity that may not be relevant elsewhere. For example, the interactions between British colonial legacies and local processes and actors took place because of specific socio-political circumstances in colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia. This means that my research findings may not have direct transferability to other contexts.

However, I argue that the concept of citizenship habitus has more theoretical mileage and applicability in any other migration context. Citizenship habitus is a postcolonial framework that offers an understanding of how and why a citizenry carry out their citizenship and migration decisions. As a set of inherited dispositions, citizenship habitus informs and circumscribes migrants' interpretations and practices of citizenship, as well as how they see their "original" citizenship vis-à-vis other citizenship(s). As a conceptual tool, citizenship habitus can be used to examine the historicity of citizenship in a particular migration context, in order to project that understanding onto contemporary migration phenomena.

Furthermore, my research insights and their theoretical and policy implications can be abstracted in application to other empirical contexts. These include, for example, my observations of the longevity of colonial legacies having implications for contemporary

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<sup>112</sup> A first step could be the recognition of UEC and the integration of MICSS graduates into Malaysian public universities.

migration, the links between internal and international migration, the role race plays in citizenship and migration, as well as the need to contextualise meanings of key migration concepts to local epistemologies and bottom-up understandings. In highlighting the use of Malaysia as a case study as a potential limitation in this thesis, I am merely raising a caveat to my *descriptive findings*, and not their *substantive implications*.

### **Respondents: Bias and Representativeness**

Although I have tried to recruit Malaysians of various ethnicities, the majority of my respondents are of Chinese ethnicity. On the one hand, I have discussed how my positionality as a Malaysian-Chinese could have prevented me from accessing Malay respondents. On the other hand, this means that the over-representation of Malaysian-Chinese perspectives could have produced an incomplete picture of mobile Malaysians' transnational migration geographies.

However, I have also highlighted that there are diversities within the arbitrary category of "Malaysian-Chinese". Other than dialects and sub-ethnic cultures, the diversity of the Malaysian-Chinese experience is also influenced by class, education stream, and geographies of origins. While I acknowledge the potential bias that could have been present in my thesis, I also wish to highlight that we need to move beyond race/ethnicity as the definitive factor in understanding migration – especially in the Malaysian context. Instead, we need to unpack and tease out what is conflated in each race/ethnic category, and to see if these "diversity within diversities" matter in advancing our understanding of migration.

### **Researcher's Positionality**

My positionality accords certain advantages for this research, including insider knowledge and access to respondents. On the other hand, my positionality necessarily shapes and colours how I have designed, carried out, interpreted and presented this thesis. One could argue that I am a product of Malaysia's citizenship habitus, which could have influenced how I made research and writing decisions in this thesis. One could also argue that because I started from the disciplines of human geography and migration studies, this could have pointed me to a certain theoretical direction and trained me to emphasise certain issues and not others.

Ultimately, all research is a set of incomplete stories and "situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988) in the larger scheme of things. What I have attempted to achieve in this thesis is an

*alternative* way of explaining migration phenomena. I acknowledge that this perspective is partial and may be biased. However, I also point to the need to see each research project as a small contribution to the larger puzzle of collective human knowledge.

Spivak (1988, p. 281) reveals:

*I turn to Indian material because, in the absence of advanced disciplinary training, that accident of birth and education has provided me with a sense of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for a bricoleur, ... Yet the Indian case cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures, and the like that may be invoked as the Other of Europe as Self.*

Similarly, I turn to my experiences and (partial) knowledge of Malaysia – perhaps out of familiarity originally. However, through an iterative process of moving between my positionality as researcher, migrant, citizen, etc., I have learnt to see past existing frames of knowing. What I offer here is a *partial* story gleaned from my specific experiences – especially during this research journey.

#### **9.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

My research findings highlight some areas requiring further examination. These include the relationship(s) between migration and stratifying factors of education streams, sub-national geographies and temporalities of origin, and class (instead of race). While my suggestions for future research arise from, and relates specifically to Malaysian migration, they can be similarly extended to other migration contexts. A final suggestion is to compare post-colonial experiences with regards to citizenship and migration.

##### **Education Streams**

My research suggests that the education stream seems to influence individual mobile Malaysians' migration geographies, as well as their relative acceptance of affirmative action policies. Future research could look into how education streams stratify specific migration geographies for higher education, as well as mapping out the subsequent migration geographies. This enables an understanding of how education systems matter to migration geographies, as well as "how students *become* geographically mobile" (Carlson, 2013, p. 178) – in Malaysia or other student-migrant receiving and sending contexts.

Possible methods include comparative or longitudinal research. Case study method could also be used, for example tracing the migration geographies of a cohort of students from a specific



education stream a decade or two after their graduation. As King and Raghuram (2013, p. 135) recently suggest, there is a need for “detailed ethnographic research with [various] types of student-migrants ... to document their complex lives in the academic, social, cultural, and economic realms”.

### **Sub-national Geographies and Temporalities of Origin**

My research has also suggested that people from certain sub-national geographies take part in specific migration geographies within and beyond Malaysia. For example, those who were from Johor tend to migrate to Singapore for education at the primary or secondary level, while those who were from Selangor tend to complete their pre-university education in Malaysia and then leave for overseas education in Australia, USA and the UK. Future research could look into how sub-national geographies of origin shape specific migration trajectories with respect to the types, duration and nature of transnational and/or internal migration. This could also advance our understanding of how geographical places of origin and destination are linked in a “system of migration places”. A related point is the duration of stay in the origin context prior to emigration, and the significance of that temporal experience in influencing propensities to return migration. While my suggestions stem from the Malaysian context, similar approaches could also be explored in other contexts where internal and international migration flows intertwine.

### **Class**

Another strand for future research is to examine how class stratifies Malaysians’ migration geographies, instead of the tendency to focus on race/ethnicity. As Choi (2010, p. 38) observed:

*The racialization of class inequalities in Malaysia makes it difficult to study class issues. In the social restructuring projects after independence, the term “race” often replaced the concept of “class.”*

Similarly, Ooi (2003, pp. 174-175) has pointed out the following:

*At least two implications are involved when ethnicity is placed below class in discursive importance: First, a “false consciousness” of ethnicity encouraged by the dominant bourgeois class inhibits class unity among peasants and workers, and second, a point very obvious in the Malaysian case, where colonial policies have created a coincidence of class and ethnicity, appeals to ethnic solidarity mask class privilege.*

Class is intimately linked to Malaysians’ access and preferred choice of education streams. As my research suggests, the choice of education stream subsequently leads to specific migration

geographies and citizenship practices. Deconstructing race/ethnicity to examine class as an explanatory factor in migration could advance our understanding of how the class-stratified education system pre-selects certain migrants into certain migration geographies – even before the actual migratory movement happens. This approach also challenges the longevity of British colonial legacies in post-colonial Malaysia, which have led to social science research focusing on race/ethnicity as explanatory factor instead of class.

### **Postcolonial Comparisons**

My more ambitious suggestion pertains to comparisons between different post-colonial contexts. Such a comparative analysis offers the possibility of identifying similarities and differences in different colonial and post-colonial experiences, and how these subsequently influence education, citizenship, and migration. An example would be to compare post-colonial countries previously under British colonial influence. Another possibility would be to compare post-colonial countries under different colonial regimes (e.g. British, Dutch, French, Japanese, etc). This approach has the potential to contribute substantially to postcolonial theorisations of migration and citizenship. However, such a large-scale research programme would require further thought and collaborations before it could be realised.

## **9.5 Concluding Remarks**

In this thesis, I have argued and shown – theoretically and empirically – the longevity of British colonial legacies with long-lasting effects on Malaysia's contemporary skilled migration, both in terms of migration geographies and citizenship practices. My thesis thus challenges existing literature on skilled migration and flexible citizenship by firstly, showing how such migration may be racially-induced; and secondly, highlighting the need to conceptualise migration and citizenship practices historically. More importantly, my thesis contributes towards a renewed interest for geographers to engage critically with postcolonial interpretations of migration (Mains, et al., 2013; McIlwaine, 2008).

By showing the long-lasting effects of colonialism, my thesis also raises the urgent need for scholars to carefully produce knowledge that is context-driven, empirically-grounded, and appropriate to each specific geographical context. In sum, the longevity of colonialism lies not in its material manifestations, but in the immaterial continuities of internalised ideas, beliefs, practices, and ways of knowing.

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*Note* : Malay names are referenced in full (including in-text citations), and arranged by the author's first name.

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## Appendix A1 – Glossary and Explanations

### ***Bakti***

Literally “duty”, “service”, “faithfulness” or “devotion”.

### ***Bangsa***

Literally “race”, used to mean the national community or population.

### ***Bumiputera***

Literally “sons of soil”.

### ***Daulat***

Literally ““kingship”, “majesty” or “sanctity”.

### ***Derhaka***

Literally “crime of treason”.

### ***Dewan Negara***

Literally “Chamber of the Nation”, or Senate. *Dewan Negara* consists of 70 seats, of which 44 members are appointed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* with the Prime Minister’s advice, and 26 elected by 13 Stated Legislative Assembly to serve three-year terms with a two term limit.

### ***Dewan Rakyat***

Literally “Chamber of the People”, or House of Representatives. *Dewan Rakyat* consists of 222 seats, where members are elected in general elections to serve a five-year term.

### ***Kampong***

Literally “village”, used to mean “hometown”.

### ***Kangany***

An immigrant labour (typically from India and South Asia) who acts as a recruitment agent for the plantation owner.

### ***Ketuanan Melayu***

Literally “Malay sovereignty” or “Malay supremacy”). This term has been used to politically legitimise the Malays’ special position, articulated as the *Bumiputera* status.

### ***Melayu***

Literally “Malay”.

### ***Menteri Besar***

Literally “Chief Minister”. The *Menteri Besar* is the head of state government.

### ***Merantau***

Literally “wandering”.

### ***Merdeka***

Literally “independence” or “freedom”.

### ***Orang asli***

Literally “original peoples”.

**Orang laut**

Literally “sea peoples”.

**Pendatang**

Literally “newcomers”, used in negative reference to “immigrants” or “sojourners”.

**Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR)**

The PMR is awarded after obtaining a pass in an examination taken after completing nine years of schooling, after Form Three. It was formerly known as SRP.

**Penumpang**

Literally “squatters”, used in negative reference to “immigrants” or “sojourners”.

**Rakyat**

Literally “the people”, used to mean commoners or subjects.

**Rukunegara**

Literally “Articles of Faith of the State”, introduced in 1970. The *Rukunegara* contains five principles, including “Belief in God”, “Loyalty to King and Country”, “Upholding the Constitution”, “Rule of Law”, and “Good Behaviour and Morality”.

**Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (SRP)**

The SRP is awarded after obtaining a pass in an examination taken after completing nine years of schooling, after Form Three.

**Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)**

The SPM is awarded after obtaining a pass in an examination taken after completing the upper secondary school, after Form Five. It is equivalent to the GCE ‘O’ Levels.

**Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM)**

The STPM is awarded after obtaining a pass in an examination taken after completing post secondary level, after Form Six. It is equivalent to the GCE ‘A’ Levels.

**Tanah Melayu**

Literally “the Malay land”, used to mean the Malay peninsula during the British colonial administration.

**Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR)**

The UPSR is awarded after obtaining a pass in an examination taken after completing primary school level, after Standard Six.

**Yang di-Pertuan Agong**

Literally “He who is Lord”. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* is the head of state of Malaysia, and is elected from the Conference of Rulers on a rotational basis.

## Appendix A2 – Evolution of Research Framing

Stage	Date	Provisional title	Hypotheses or Research Questions	Keywords
Before fieldwork	October 2010 (Month 1)	Between Real and Imaginary Return Migrations: Geographies of Tertiary-Educated Malaysians in Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur Interpreting and Performing “Skilled Diasporic Citizenship”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a disconnect between interpretations and enactments of “citizenship” from “above” and from “below”</li> <li>- This disconnection has contributed to why return migration and reverse brain drain policies have not been effective</li> <li>- Effects of the disconnection (across time, generations) can be further unpacked</li> <li>- Geography matters in these processes</li> </ul>	Citizenship and return migration decisions from migrants’ perspectives
	January 2011 (Month 4)	Citizenship and Emotional Geographies in an Age of Scarcity: A Comparative Study of Skilled Diasporic Migration of Malaysians in Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Citizenship (as emotional meanings and practices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Citizenship</li> <li>- Emotional geography</li> <li>- Scarcity</li> </ul>
	February 2011 (Month 5)	Between Real and Imaginary Return Migrations: Emotional Geographies and Skilled Diasporic Citizenships of Malaysians in Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the emotional geographies of “skilled diasporic citizenship” for skilled Malaysian diasporas in Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur?</li> <li>- How does geography matter in their “skilled diasporic citizenship”?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Skilled diasporic citizenship”</li> <li>- Emotional geography</li> </ul>
	April 2011 (Month 7)	Emotional Geographies of Skilled Diasporic Citizenship: Malaysians (and ex-Malaysians) in Singapore, London and Kuala Lumpur Negotiating Citizenship and Migration Trajectories		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotions of migration</li> <li>- Geographies of emotions in the context of skilled migration</li> <li>- Emotional-knowing of official migration statuses</li> </ul>

	July 2011 (Month 10)	Strategizing Uncertain (Neoliberal) Migrations: Malaysians Negotiating Emotional Geographies of Skilled Diasporic Citizenship in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotions and emotional geography can provide fresh insights to migration studies by linking structure and agency at both macro- and micro-scales.</li> <li>- Geographies matter for emotional geographies.</li> <li>- Official migration statuses as citizens, diasporas or transnational skilled migrants matter for skilled diasporas, but these are circumvented in their “actually-existing” emotional geographies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotions and emotional geography</li> <li>- Official citizenship statuses</li> </ul>
	August 2011 (Month 11)	Choice in Strategizing Uncertain Migrations: Malaysians Negotiating Emotional Geographies of Skilled Diasporic Citizenship in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotions and emotional geography can provide fresh insights to migration studies as a structuration approach, and in theorising the triadic relationships between migrants, their emigration and immigration states.</li> <li>- Geographies matter for emotional geographies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structuration approach</li> <li>- Triadic relationships between migrants, their emigration and immigration states</li> </ul>
	September 2011 (Month 12)	Emotional Geographies of Skilled Diasporic Citizenship: Malaysians in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysian skilled diasporas’ emotional geographies are tied to “the family”. Hence, their citizenship and migration trajectories are primarily motivated by “the family”.</li> <li>- These familial-tied emotional geographies can be attributed to the intentionally ambiguous notions of ethnic-based “citizenship” and multicultural “nationality” in Malaysia – institutionalised during Malaysia’s nation building period (mid-1940s to 1970s), and conveniently practised as such thereafter (1970s to the present).</li> <li>- Transnational, national and local geographies matter in Malaysian skilled diasporas’ emotional geographies, and these translate into their “actually-existing” citizenship and migration trajectories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familial-tied emotional geographies</li> <li>- Ambiguity between citizenship and nationality in Malaysia</li> </ul>
After fieldwork	May 2012 (Month 20)	Learning about being “Malaysian” in Migration: Emotional Geographies of, and with Malaysian “Diasporas”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Migration is a process of self-discovery and self-development that impact on the meanings one places on, and derives from “citizenship”. This is particularly so as acts of migration are interlinked with (1) citizenship as identity, membership and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Migration as process of self-discovery and self-development</li> <li>- Researcher positionality</li> </ul>

		in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	rights; (2) citizenship and migration trajectories as (individual, familial and/or culture of migration) strategies for social mobility and the accumulation of capital; and (3) shifting circumstances and meanings in line with one's life trajectory.	and reflexivity
	June 2012 (Month 21)	Learning about being "Malaysian" in Migration: Emotional Geographies of, and with Malaysian "Diasporas" in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	- How one learns to <i>be</i> a Malaysian citizen through migration	- Migration as learning process
	August 2012 (Month 23)	Constituting Citizenship(s) in a Culture of Migration: Encounters and Conversations with Skilled Malaysian Diasporas in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	- An institutionalised culture of migration, coupled with the historically unresolved Malaysian citizenship that is <i>Bumiputera</i> -differentiated and kept ambiguous, impact on the Malaysian diasporas' migration trajectories.	- Culture of migration - <i>Bumiputera</i> -differentiated citizenship
	November 2012 (Month 26)	Constituting Citizenship(s) in a Culture of Migration: Encounters and Conversations with Skilled Malaysian Diasporas in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	The historicity of an ambiguous, <i>Bumiputera</i> -differentiated Malaysian citizenship resulted in two migration-related phenomena. - Firstly, migrating for education as a strategy for social mobility becomes matter-of-fact. - Secondly, the Malaysian citizenship – conflated with the place of birth, the family and the imagined community – is understood primarily through primordial and emotional dimensions, while other citizenship(s) are understood primarily through the practical dimension.	- Relationship between historicity of citizenship with migration phenomena - Migrating for education as matter-of-fact - Citizenship meanings: Primordial and emotional versus practical
	December 2012 (Month 27)	Transnational Migration Geographies, Citizenship Habitus, and a Culture of Migration: Reflecting with Mobile Malaysians in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	- Mobile Malaysians' transnational migration geographies are preconditioned and influenced by Malaysia's citizenship habitus (i.e. citizenship as identity versus rights; state-citizen relationship) and the resultant culture of (transnational) migration (i.e. migration as a way of life) - However, one attains a greater sense of self-awareness	- Citizenship habitus - Culture of migration - Learning about citizenship through the migration process



		Lumpur	about “citizenship” immigration. This comes with the ability to adopt a comparative spatial lens, and agency to exercise citizenship and mobility choices. On the one hand, one develops an essentialised consciousness of “being Malaysian”; on the other hand, one becomes critical of social, economic and political developments in Malaysia due to awareness of alternatives in other migration contexts.	
	February 2013 (Month 29)	Transnational Migration Experience, Citizenship Habitus and a Culture of Migration: Reflecting with Mobile Malaysians in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur	- Malaysia’s citizenship habitus produces a culture of migration, which in turn empowers mobile Malaysians to question and challenge this citizenship habitus	- Citizenship habitus - Culture of migration - Transnational migration experience
	April 2013 (Month 31)	(Postcolonial) Citizenship Habitus and A Culture of Migration: Mobile Malaysians in London, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur Negotiating Citizenship as (Ethno)Nationality and Loyalty	- A postcolonial approach to explain mobile Malaysians’ citizenship and migration practices	- Citizenship habitus - Culture of migration - Postcolonial approach - Citizenship, nationality and loyalty

## Appendix A3 – Archival Materials Consulted

The tables here document archival materials I consulted from August 2011 to January 2012 and from March to May 2013. Not all the materials consulted were directly related to the themes presented in this thesis. However, they were important in providing the historical contexts of colonial and post-colonial Malaysia and Singapore, and in shaping my interpretations of this research.

Overview of materials consulted:

- Materials consulted at The National Archive in London (**Table A3.1**) were the most comprehensive, covering colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia and Singapore from the perspectives of the British colonial administration.
- Materials consulted at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library in Singapore (**Table A3.2**) pertain to private papers in the H.S. Lee and David Marshall collection. Tun Sir Henry Lee Hau Shik (H.S. Lee) (1901-1988) was a prominent member of the Malayan Chinese community, and part of the Alliance mission in the 1956 constitutional talks in London. David Marshall (1908-1995) was Singapore's First Chief Minister.
- Materials consulted at The National Archives of Singapore (**Table A3.3**) consist of two groups: first, speeches and radio interviews on the implications of the Federation of Malaysia citizenship for Singapore residents; and second, oral histories on broader themes of socio-political life in Singapore.
- Materials consulted at the National Archives of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur (**Table A3.4**) were more piecemeal and ad-hoc, generally covering issues of citizenship, brain drain and skilled migration.

**Table A3.1: Materials at The National Archive, London**

Department	Reference	Description
Records of the British Council	BW 91	Technical Education and Training Organisation for Overseas Countries: Correspondence and Papers
Records of the Cabinet Office	CAB 66	War Cabinet and Cabinet: Memoranda (WP and CP Series)
	CAB 129	Cabinet: Memoranda (CP and C Series)
	CAB 134	Cabinet: Miscellaneous Committees: Minutes and Papers (General Series)
	CAB 195	Cabinet Secretary's Notebooks
Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies	CO 273	Colonial Office: Straits Settlements Original Correspondence
	CO 323	Colonies, General: Original Correspondence
	CO 537	Colonial Office and predecessors: Confidential General and Confidential Original Correspondence
	CO 717	Colonial Office: Federated Malay States: Original Correspondence
	CO 825	Colonial Office: Eastern Original Correspondence
	CO 874	British North Borneo Company: Papers
	CO 876	Colonial Office: Welfare Department, later Students Department: Registered Files
	CO 882	War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Confidential Print Eastern
	CO 885	War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office:

		Subjects Affecting Colonies Generally, Confidential Print
	CO 889	Colonial Office: Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission (Reid Commission): Minutes and Papers
	CO 1022	Colonial Office: South East Asia Department: Original Correspondence
	CO 1028	Colonial Office: Students Department, later Students Branch: Registered Files (STU Series)
	CO 1030	Colonial Office and Commonwealth Office: Far Eastern Department and successors: Registered Files (FED Series)
Records created or inherited by the Dominions Office, and of the Commonwealth Relations and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices	DO 35	Dominions Office and Commonwealth Relations Office: Original Correspondence
	DO 169	Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office: Far East and Pacific Department: Registered Files (FE Series)
	DO 176	Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office: Nationality and Consular Department and predecessors: Registered Files, Commonwealth Nationality (NAT Series)
	DO 187	Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office: Nationality and Consular Department and predecessors: Registered Files, Commonwealth Nationality (NAT Series)
Records created or inherited by the Department of Education and Science, and of related bodies	ED 114	Board of Education and successors: Inspectorate: Reports on Institutes of Further Education
	ED 168	Department of Education and Science and predecessors: Technical Branch and Further Education Branch: Major Establishments, Registered Files (T Series)
Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors	FCO 24	Commonwealth Office, Far East and Pacific Department and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, South West Pacific Department: Registered Files (H and FW Series)
	FCO 37	Commonwealth Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: South Asia Department: Registered Files (S and FS Series)
	FCO 50	Commonwealth Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Migration and Visa Department and predecessor: Registered Files (GM and GV Series)
	FCO 51	Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors: Research Department: Registered Files (LR and RR Series)
	FCO 53	Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors: Nationality and Treaty Departments: Registered Files (NN, NT, TY and GN Series)
	FCO 58	Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: United Nations (Political) Department: Registered Files (UP and UL Series)
	FCO 68	Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Commonwealth Co-ordination Department: Registered Files (HC Series)
	FCO 141*	Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors:

		Records of Former Colonial Administrations: Migrated Archives
Records created or inherited by the Home Office, Ministry of Home Security, and related bodies	HO 213	Home Office: Aliens Department: General (GEN) Files and Aliens' Naturalization and Nationality (ALN and NTY Symbol Series) Files
Records created or inherited by the Central Office of Information	INF 10	British Empire Collection of Photographs
Records created or inherited by the Department of Technical Co-operation, and successive Overseas Development bodies	OD 20	Department of Technical Co-operation and successors: Finance and Regional Programmes Department, later Finance Department: Registered Files (CF Series)
	OD 39	Ministry of Overseas Development and Overseas Development Administration: Malaysia and Singapore Department and successors: Registered Files (MS Series)
Records created or inherited by the War Office, Armed Forces, Judge Advocate General, and related bodies	WO 32	War Office and successors: Registered Files (General Series)
	WO 203	War Office: South East Asia Command: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War

*\* Released between April 2012 and November 2013 in phases. Malaya files were available in April 2012, while Singapore files (batch 1) were available in April 2013. Batch 2 of Singapore files was released on 27 September 2013, while batch 3 will be available in November 2013.*

**Table A3.2: Materials at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Library, Singapore**

Series	Reference	Description
H S Lee Papers*	HSL 001	UMNO-MCA Alliance
	HSL 004	Road to independence (Merdeka talks)
	HSL 016	National Convention and National Congress
	HSL 017	White Paper on Federal Elections
	HSL 030	Citizenship and Jus Soli 1952-1956
	HSL 034	Singapore: Politics and administration 1952-1955
David Marshall Papers	DM 086	Press Releases Jul 1961-Aug 1962
	DM 090	Worker's Party Aug 1961-Jan 1963
	DM 204	Correspondence Sep-Dec 1961
	DM 210	Correspondence Jun-Oct 1963
	DM 310	Opinions re Singapore Referendum Jun-Aug 1962

*\* Donated to the ISEAS Library in January 2010, and made available to readers in May 2010.*

**Table A3.3: Materials at The National Archives of Singapore**

Collection	Title
Speeches	Transcript of a Radio Forum by Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, on the Citizenship Issue Broadcast Over Radio Singapore at 7.10 p.m. on Saturday, August 18, 1962
	Transcript of a Recording in which the Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Answered Questions on Citizenship and Other Related Matters Which Were Put To Him by Mr David Marshall of The Workers Party (To Be Broadcast Over Radio Singapore at 7.10 p.m. on Sunday, August 19, 1962
	Transcript of a Radio Forum by Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, on the Citizenship Issue Broadcast Over Radio Singapore at 7.10 p.m. on Saturday, August 20, 1962
	Transcript of a Radio Forum by Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, on the Citizenship Issue Broadcast Over Radio Singapore at 7.10 p.m. on Saturday, August 25, 1962
Oral History Centre	Special Project 特别计划
	Pioneers of Singapore 新加坡先驱人物
	Communities of Singapore (Part 1)
	Communities of Singapore (Part 2)
	Communities of Singapore (Part 3)
	Education in Singapore (Part 2: Chinese) 新加坡教育史
	Chinese Dialect Groups 华人方言群
	Political History in Singapore 1945-1965 新加坡政治发展史
	The Civil Service - A Retrospection 新加坡公共服务史

**Table A3.4: Materials at National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur**

Various documents were found through searching keywords “*warganegara*” (lit. “citizenship”) and “citizenship”. The list below shows only key documents and not the comprehensive list of all documents consulted.

Reference	Title or Description
1991/0024830	Singapore citizens in Malaysia
1991/0017122	Law. Citizenship
2000/0023665	Colombo Plan – Country Paper on the Special Topic for 1972/73 “Brain Drain” in Developing Countries
2006/00976	<i>Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 3/1995 - Garis Panduan Mengenai Pengambilan Saintis Warganegara Malaysia Di Luar Negeri Dan Saintis Asing</i> (Service Circular No. 3/1995 - Guidelines Regarding the Appointment of Overseas Malaysian and Foreign Scientists)
2006/0026283	A Comparison Of The Principal Citizenship Provisions Of The Federation Of Malaya Agreement With The Several Proposals For Their Amendment And For The Creation Of State Nationality - October 1950
2010/00324	Speech delivered at the 5th Razak Lecture accompanied by a background paper, Malay Nationalism and Globalisation by Ghazali Shafie, on 26 March 1998

## Appendix A4 – Respondents’ Profiles

**Table A4.1: Respondents Residing in Singapore**

Respondent	Age (in 2011)	Gender	Marital status and number of children	Citizenship status	<i>Bumiputera</i>	Highest qualification	Reason for first emigration (age at first emigration)
S01	28	F	Married, no children	MC + SPR (D)	X	B	Follow spouse (26)
S02	29	M	Single	MC + SPR	X	B	Born in Singapore (0)
S03	32	M	Single	SC	X	B	University (18)
S04	50	M	Single	MC + SPR	X	B	Pre-university (18)
S05	27	F	Married, no children	MC + SPR	X	B	Follow partner (23)
S06	34	M	Married, 2 children	SC	X	B	Postgraduate employment (24)
S07	48	M	Married, 1 child	MC + SPR	X	B	University (18)
S08	49	M	Married, 2 children	MC + SPR	X	B	University (20)
S09	29	F	Engaged	MC + SPR	X	B	Daily-commute (7)
S10	29	F	Single	MC + SPR	X	M	University (18)
S11	57	M	Married, 1 child	MC	X	P	University (19)
S12	38	F	Married, 2 children	SC	X	B	Daily-commute (7)
S13	25	M	Single	MC + SPR	X	M	University (18)
S14	38	F	Married, 1 child	MC + SPR	X	P	University (18)
S15	38	M	Married, no children	MC + SPR	X	M	University (18)
S16	61	F	Married, 2 children	SC	X	P	Pre-university (18)
S17	24	F	Single	MC + (A) SPR	X	B	University (20)
S18	34	F	Married, no children	MC + SPR (D)	X	M	Secondary school (12)
S19	32	M	Married, no children	MC + SPR	X	M	Pre-university (17)
S20	28	M	Single	MC	X	M	Further education (20)
S21	38	M	Married, 2 children	MC + SPR	X	B	Follow family (3)
S22	31	M	Married, no children	MC + SPR	X	B	Pre-university (18)

S23	28	M	Single	MC	X	B	Postgraduate employment (25)
S24	38	M	Single	SC	X	B	Born in Singapore (0)
S25	33	F	Single	MC + APR	X	B	University (21)
S26	29	F	Single	MC + SPR	X	M	University (18)
S27	27	M	Single	MC	X	M	University (19)

Legend:

MC	Malaysian citizen
SC	Singapore citizen
SPR	Singapore permanent resident
(A) SPR	Applying for Singapore permanent residence
SPR (D)	Singapore permanent resident as a dependent
APR	Australian PR

B	Bachelor degree
M	Masters degree
P	PhD degree

**Table A4.2: Respondents Residing in London/UK**

Respondent	Age (in 2011)	Gender	Marital status and number of children	Citizenship status	<i>Bumiputera</i>	Highest qualification	Reason for first emigration (age at first emigration)
L01	58	F	Married, 3 children	MC + ILR	√	M	Further education (22)
L02	32	M	Single	BC	X	B	Pre-university (18)
L03	29	F	Single	MC	X	B	University (twinning) (21)
L04	38	F	Married, 3 children	MC + ILR	X	M	Pre-university (17)
L05	26	F	Single	MC	X	M	Pre-university (17)
L06	38	F	Single	MC	X	B	University (20)
L07	28	M	Single	MC	X	B	University (twinning) (20)
L08	28	M	Single	MC	X	B	University (twinning) (20)
L09	24	F	Single	MC	X	B	University (20)
L10	29	F	Single	MC	X	B	University (twinning) (24)
L11	28	F	Single	MC + BC	X	B	Secondary school (13)
L12	29	F	Single	MC + XPR	√	B	Follow family (0)
L13	34	F	Remarried, 1 child	MC + ILR	√	B	Pre-university (18)
L14	32	F	Single	MC + BC (<1983)	X	M	Born in UK (0)
L15	34	F	Married, 1 child	MC + BC (<1983)	√	M	Born in UK (0)
L16	42	F	Married, 1 child	MC + ILR	X	M	Pre-university (17)

**Legend:**

MC	Malaysian citizen	B	Bachelor degree
BC	British citizen	M	Masters degree
BC (<1983)	British citizen by birth in the UK, before 1 January 1983	P	PhD degree
XPR	European Country X permanent resident		
ILR	UK Indefinite Leave to Remain		



**Table A4.3: Respondents Residing in Other Global Locations**

Respondent	Age (in 2011)	Gender	Marital status and number of children	Citizenship status	Current location	<i>Bumiputera</i>	Highest qualification	Reason for first emigration (age at first emigration)
G01	30	M	Married, 0 child	MC	Middle East city	X	M	Further education (22)
G02	38	M	Divorced	MC	French city	√	M	University (17)
G03	29	F	Single	MC	French city	X	P	University (17)
G04	30	M	Single	MC	US city	X	B	Follow family (16)
G05	32	M	Single	MC + SPR	Swiss city	X	B	Pre-university (17)
G06	36	M	Single	MC + SPR	Indonesian city	X	B	University (20)

Legend:

MC            Malaysian citizen  
 SPR          Singapore permanent resident

B            Bachelor degree  
 M            Masters degree  
 P            PhD degree

**Table A4.4: Respondents Who Returned to Malaysia**

Respondent	Age (in 2011)	Gender	Marital status and number of children	Citizenship status	Current location	<i>Bumiputera</i>	Highest qualification	Reason for first emigration (age at first emigration)
M01	40	F	Married, 4 children	MC	JB	X	P	Further education (27)
M02	34	M	Married, 1 child	MC + SPR	KL	X	B	Postgraduate employment (24)
M03	32	M	Single	MC	KL	X	B	Employment (24)
M04	40	M	Single	MC + US	KL	X	M	University (19)
M05	49	F	Married, 3 children	MC	KL	√	B	University (24)
M06	33	F	Married, no children	MC	KL	X	B	Employment (30)
M07	59	M	Married, 2 children	MC	KL	X	M	Further studies (22)
M08	38	M	Single	MC	KL	X	M	University (twinning) (21)
M09	31	F	Single	MC	KL	X	B	Professional training (21)
M10	67	M	Single	MPR + US	KL	X	-	Employment (19)
M11	33	F	Married, 2 children	MC	KL	X	B	University (twinning) (21)
M12	34	M	Single	MC	KL	X	M	University (18)
M13	40	M	Married, 2 children	MC + SPR	JB	X	B	University (twinning) (20)
M14	49	F	Married, 4 children	MC	KL	X	B	Further studies (23)
M15	40	M	Married, 5 children	MC + SPR	City S	X	B	Follow partner (22)
M16	41	F	Married, 2 children	MC + USPR	KL	X	M	Pre-university (17)
M17	35	M	Married, 1 child	MC	KL	X	B	Secondary school (12)
M18	32	F	Single	MC	JB	X	B	University (17)

Legend:

M            Malaysian citizen  
MPR        Malaysian permanent resident  
SPR        Singapore permanent resident  
US          US citizen  
USPR      US green card holder

B            Bachelor degree  
M            Masters degree  
P            PhD degree

## Appendix A5 – Recruitment Statement and Project Motivation

### Recruitment Statement

This is the full text of the recruitment page published on my research blog. I ensured that any interested participants refer to this statement prior to them agreeing to be interviewed. Before each interview session, I would reiterate the broad overview of my research, and elaborate on matters of confidentiality and anonymity.

#### About

##### What is this all about?

I am conducting my PhD research on professional Malaysians in London, Singapore and returnees to Malaysia. This includes those who have taken-up permanent resident (PR) or other citizenship status. I am interested in understanding how you make your migration/mobility and citizenship decisions, and how you feel about your migration/mobility experiences. [Read “Motivation” for background information.](#)

##### Who are you looking for?

I am looking for Malaysians and ex-Malaysians (25-50 years old) who fit ANY ONE of the following criteria to interview as part of my research:

- professional Malaysians who have returned to Malaysia (ideally to Kuala Lumpur or Johor Bahru) after a period of working overseas; or
- professional Malaysians in the UK (ideally London), including those with Indefinite Leave To Remain (ILR)/permanent residence (PR) status or British citizenship; or
- professional Malaysians in Singapore or Johor Bahru, including those with PR or Singapore citizenship

*Note: I am always happy to talk to anyone who may not fit the criteria above, but who is interested. Drop me a line!*

##### What do I get out of my participation?

- A chance to reflect on your experiences, thoughts and feelings
- An opportunity to discuss your views on this topic
- An opportunity to contribute – to knowledge, to real change, to the future

##### I want to participate but I’m not sure if I fit the criteria

Please [e-mail me](#), or use the [feedback form](#) if you are interested. I would love to hear from you.

##### How can I participate?

1. Please fill in [this form](#) to indicate your interest and contact details.
2. Interview (40 mins – 1 hour): either face-to-face or online (Skype, msn, facebook).

**Who will have access to my identity and comments?**

As a participant to this research, your identity and responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

**How will you use my responses?**

I aim to collect about 50-60 interviews. These, together with other data (from archival documents, newspapers, reports, statistics, etc.) will be used to formulate my PhD thesis, to be submitted to the Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Parts of my thesis may be published as academic journal articles, working papers, conference papers, book chapters and/or monographs.

**Who is funding this research?**

I am receiving funding from Robert and Dilys Rawson Scholarship for my PhD studies from October 2011. This scholarship is administered by the Department of Geography and Environment, LSE.

**How do I know if you are for real?**

This is my [academic profile](#), maintained as a personal page at the LSE.

**I don't want to participate but I want to help**

- Forward [this](#) to people who might be interested.
- E-mail me your comments and suggestions, or leave them [here](#).

**Project Motivation**

This is the full text explaining my motivations for this research project. It covers three areas: firstly, my personal quest for answers; secondly, a national issue of brain drain and mobile Malaysians located in Singapore and the UK; and thirdly, a global issue of "talent wars".

**Motivation****A personal quest for answers**

I am one of you. Like you, I am also trying to figure out my views about the country I was born in, about whether I will return, about the very real and contradictory considerations each of us have to grapple with in our citizenship and mobility decisions. This project is a quest for answers.

**A national issue**

Brain drain and the many who left

- The World Bank (2011: 103) estimates that the "Malaysian diaspora" has reached 1 million in 2010 compared to 750,000 in 2000, while the Malaysian brain drain is currently estimated to be a third of its overall diaspora (335,000 in 2010 compared to 217,000 in 2000).

- Emigration of tertiary-educated Malaysians to OECD countries have increased by an overall 40% between 1990 and 2000 (based on UN statistics).
- Between 2007 and 2008/09, emigration from Malaysia more than doubled – 304,358 emigrated between March 2008 to August 2009, compared to 139,696 in 2007 (Bedi & Azizan, 2010).

#### Malaysians in Singapore and the UK

- Singapore has been hosting the largest Malaysian brain drain, which more than tripled between 1990 and 2000, and doubled between 2000 and 2010 (based on World Bank, 2011)
- In 2010, Malaysians constitute 47% of Singapore's tertiary-educated foreign population (World Bank, 2011).
- By 2007, the UK is hosting about 61,000 Malaysians, compared to about 38,000 in 2000 (World Bank, 2011).

#### BUT

- Despite the economic, social and political push factors driving Malaysians to leave, many continue to retain and nurture a sense of emotional belonging to Malaysia.
- Some refuse to give up their Malaysian citizenship despite years of living elsewhere.
- Some remain hopeful for an eventual "return" to Malaysia, e.g. for retirement.

#### The present situation: Talent wars?

##### Increasingly selective immigration policies in Singapore and the UK

- Between 2008 and 2009, the number of Singapore PRs granted has dropped by 25%, while the number of Singapore citizenships granted has dropped by 3%. ([Calculated from Chart 2 here](#)).
- The UK government has closed Tier 1 (General) visas, and placed number limits on Tier 2 visas. ([UKBA, 21 Dec 2010](#))

##### And so is Malaysia

- On 12 Apr 2011, the Malaysian government announced a flat 15% income tax rate tenable for consecutive 5 years for qualified returning professionals under the revamped 2001 Returning Expert Programme (REP). However, applicants are "required to be skilled and able to contribute to the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs)" (MYWorkLife website accessed on 13 Apr 2011, content has since changed). [See this page for details of REP](#).
- The Resident's Pass (RP), launched on 1 Apr 2011, is available to "highly skilled expatriates seeking to continue living and working in Malaysia" (TalentCorp website). Applicants must be experts in "key Malaysian industries". [See this page for details of RP](#).

#### WHAT NEXT FOR THE MOBILE MALAYSIAN?

I don't know ... join me to find out!

## Appendix A6 – Interview Guide

This interview guide contains broad themes I covered with my respondents during each interview conversation. I used this as a general guide, and let conversations flow normally. Sometimes my respondents will voluntarily touch upon themes I wanted to discuss without me prompting them. Occasionally I would steer the conversation back to some issues I wanted to hear my respondent's views on.

Themes	Sample Questions
Place of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me where you were from originally in Malaysia.</li> <li>• How long did you live there?</li> <li>• Where were your parents from?</li> </ul>
Migration in the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did your parents move?</li> <li>• Where are they currently residing?</li> <li>• Where are your siblings currently residing in?</li> <li>• Do you have any relatives in your family who have migrated?</li> </ul>
Migration trajectory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you first leave Malaysia?</li> <li>• How did you end up here [in Singapore/ London/ other global location]?</li> <li>• What were your considerations for moving?</li> <li>• Did you have any contacts here [in Singapore/ London/ other global location] before moving?</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which types of school did you go to in Malaysia?</li> <li>• Did your sibling(s) go to similar schools? Why?</li> <li>• What pre-university course did you study? Why?</li> <li>• Have you considered studying in Malaysian public universities? Why?</li> </ul>
Overseas education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose [country X] to pursue your university degree?</li> <li>• What do you think of your overseas education experience?</li> <li>• Did your sibling(s) go overseas for education? Where?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention parents made the decision]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think your parents made that decision?</li> <li>• Looking back, do you think your parents made the right choice?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention other Malaysian classmates]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are they now? Are they in Malaysia, this country, or elsewhere?</li> <li>• Do you keep in contact with them?</li> </ul>
Citizenship and permanent resident status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your current citizenship status?</li> <li>• Are you a permanent resident of this country?</li> <li>• Why did you take up permanent residence?</li> </ul>
Meanings of citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does citizenship mean to you?</li> <li>• How important is keeping your Malaysian citizenship to you? Why?</li> </ul>

	<p><i>[If mention renunciation of Malaysian citizenship]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were your considerations for giving up Malaysian citizenship?</li> <li>• Was it difficult for you to make that decision?</li> <li>• Has any of your sibling(s), relatives or friends given-up their Malaysian citizenship?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention parents' role in decision-making]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did your parents say?</li> <li>• Was it important for you to get their support?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention children]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it important that your children have Malaysian citizenship? Why?</li> <li>• If it was possible for your children to have Malaysian citizenship, would you have applied for them? Why?</li> </ul>
Being Malaysian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you consider yourself Malaysian?</li> <li>• What do you mean when you say that you are a Malaysian?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention children]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it important that your children know the Malaysian culture? Why?</li> <li>• What are some of the things you do to let them experience the Malaysian culture?</li> </ul>
Citizenship and loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people say that citizenship is tied to a sense of loyalty. What do you think?</li> <li>• Why do you think so?</li> </ul>
Keeping in touch with developments in Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you keep yourself updated about news and development in Malaysia?</li> <li>• How do you keep yourself updated? How often?</li> <li>• What is the latest news you recall?</li> </ul>
Visits to Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do you visit Malaysia?</li> <li>• How long do you usually stay?</li> <li>• When was the last time you visited?</li> <li>• How did you feel?</li> <li>• Have you noticed anything different?</li> </ul>
Future migration plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your plans in the immediate future? Will you stay here? Why?</li> <li>• What are your plans in the longer-term future? Will you stay here? Why?</li> </ul>
Return	<p><i>[For returnees to Malaysia]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you decide to move back to Malaysia?</li> <li>• Do you see this as a permanent stay? Why?</li> <li>• Are your parents currently residing in Malaysia?</li> </ul> <p><i>[For returnees who re-migrated]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you decide to move back to Malaysia previously?</li> <li>• Why did you decide to leave again?</li> </ul>

	<p><i>[For non-returnees]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you considered moving back to Malaysia? Why?</li> <li>• Are your parents currently residing in Malaysia?</li> <li>• Have you considered returning to Malaysia for retirement? Why?</li> </ul>
Malaysia's brain drain issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your thoughts about the issue of brain drain (or emigration of Malaysians) from Malaysia?</li> <li>• Are you aware of the New Economic Model (NEM)?</li> <li>• Have you heard about Talent Corporation?</li> <li>• Have you heard about the Returning Expert Programme (REP)?</li> <li>• What do you think about these policies?</li> </ul>
Malaysia's Bumiputera policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about Malaysia's <i>Bumiputera</i> policies?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention discrimination, quotas, etc.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had any personal experiences?</li> <li>• Do you have any family or friends who have personal experiences?</li> </ul>
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you voted in Malaysian elections before?</li> <li>• Are you a registered voter?</li> </ul>
Migration experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout your movements, have you ever felt that you were a migrant?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If mention discrimination]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had any personal experiences?</li> <li>• Do you have any family or friends who have personal experiences?</li> </ul>
Interest in participating in this research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me why you are interested in participating in my research?</li> </ul> <p><i>[If came through research blog]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me how you come across my blog?</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have anything further to add?</li> <li>• Do you have any questions for me?</li> </ul>



## Appendix A7 – Malaysia: Citizenship Laws

Table A7.1: Citizenship Acquisition

Political entity		Malayan Union (1 Apr 1946-31 Jan 1948)	Federation of Malaya (1 Feb 1948-30 Aug 1957)		Federation of Malaysia (31 Aug 1957-16 Sept 1963)
Legislation or Constitution		Malayan Union Order in Council, 1946 <sup>a</sup>	Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948 <sup>b</sup>	Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance, 1952 <sup>c</sup>	1957 Constitution <sup>d</sup>
By operation of law (i.e. automatic)	Birth in-territory	Born in MU or Singapore on or after the date the Order comes into force	Born before, on or after 1 Feb 1948 as any subject of His Highness the Ruler of any State, i.e. - Aboriginal tribe resident of that State; or - Malay born in that State, or born outside that State of a father who was at the time of the birth a subject of the Ruler of the State; or - Naturalised as a subject of that Ruler	Born before, on or after 15 Sept 1952 as: - Any subject of His Highness the Ruler of any State; or - Any citizen of the UK and Colonies (CUKC) in either of the Settlements;	Born in the Federation on and after 31 Aug 1957
	Birth in-territory + Descent	- Born in/outside of MU and Singapore on or after the date Order comes into force; <b>AND</b> - Whose father was MU citizen, or obtained a	- Born before, on or after 1 Feb 1948 in Malaya; <b>AND</b> - Whose <b>father</b> was MU citizen or British subject	- Any CUKC <b>born in the Federation</b> before, on or after 15 Sept 1952 in Malaya; <b>AND</b> o <b>One of whose parents</b> was born in the	- Born outside of the Federation on or after 31 Aug 1957; <b>AND</b> - Whose father is a citizen at the time of birth, OR employed by the

		certificate of naturalisation		Federation	Government of the Federation or any State in the Federation at the time of birth; <b>OR</b> - Whose father is a citizen at the time of birth, <b>AND</b> the birth is registered at a Malayan Consulate within 12 months of the birth
	Birth ex-territory + Conditional Descent	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any CUKC <b>wherever born, on or after</b> 15 Sept 1952; <b>AND</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Whose <b>father</b> was born in either if the Settlements and at the time of his birth, completed a contiguous 15 years residence in the Federation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Any CUKC <b>wherever born, before</b> 15 Sept 1952; <b>AND</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Whose <b>father</b> was born in either if the Settlements and at the time of his birth, a Federal Citizen</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Any CUKC <b>wherever born, before; AND</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Whose <b>father</b> is a Federal citizen, or a citizen of the Federation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	-

				of Malaya at the time of his birth	
	Prior citizenship	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MU citizen</li> <li>- British subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MU citizen</li> <li>- British subject</li> <li>- Federation of Malaya citizen</li> </ul>	Federation of Malaya citizen
	Prior naturalisation + Residence + others	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Naturalised CUKC under British Nationality Act, 1948; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Resided in the Settlements for an aggregate of <b>not less than 10 of the preceding 12 years</b>; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Resided in the Settlements throughout <b>2 years preceding application for naturalisation</b> as CUKC; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Taken the oath of allegiance</li> </ul>	-
	Malay + Descent	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Born before, on or after 1 Feb 1948 in any of the territories now comprised in Malaya; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Who habitually speaks the Malay language, professes the Muslim religion, and conforms to Malay customs</li> </ul>	-	-
	Birth + Residence	- Born in MU or Singapore on or after the date the Order comes into force; <b>AND</b>	-	-	-

		- Resident in MU or Singapore on that date			
	Residence + others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 18 years of age or over, ordinarily residents in MU or Singapore on the date Order comes into force; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Resident in MU or Singapore for <b>10 years during 15 years</b> preceding 15 Feb 1942; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Willing to take oath of allegiance</li> </ul>	-	-	-
By application and/or registration	Residence + others	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resident for <b>15 out of 20 years</b> preceding application; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, has <b>adequate knowledge of the <u>Malay or English</u> language</b>; has made a Declaration of Permanent Settlement; willing to take the Citizenship Oath</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 18 years of age or over who intends to live permanently in the Federation; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, has an <b><u>elementary</u> knowledge of the <u>Malay</u> language</b>; <b>AND EITHER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Born in the Federation before 31 Aug 1957 and has lived for <b>at least 5 out of 7 years</b> preceding application; <b>OR</b></li> <li>o Resident in the Federation on 31 Aug 1957 and has lived in the Federation for <b>at least 8 out of 12 years</b> preceding application</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Birth + Residence + others	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Born before, on or after 1 Feb 1948 in Malaya; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Resident for <b>8 out of 12 years</b> preceding application; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, has <b><u>adequate knowledge</u><sup>1</sup> of the <u>Malay or English</u></b></li> </ul>	-	

			<b>language</b> ; has made a Declaration of Permanent Settlement; willing to take the Citizenship Oath		
	Marriage + Others	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Woman who is a <b>CUKC</b>, who is at the time of application, married to a citizen of the Federation; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, and take the oath of allegiance</li> </ul>	- Woman who marries a citizen of the Federation
	Prior citizenship	-	-	- CUKC who is not a citizen of the Federation of Malaya	-
By naturalisation	Residence + others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resident for <b>1 year</b> preceding date of application + a further <b>4 years during the last 8 years</b> before application; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, has <u><b>adequate knowledge of the Malay or English language</b></u>; and intend to reside in MU or Singapore</li> </ul>	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resident for <b>10 out of 12 years</b> preceding date of application + a <b>2 years</b> before application; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, <b>able to speak the Malay or English language with reasonable proficiency</b>; and declares permanent settlement in the Federation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intends to live permanently in the Federation; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Of good character, has an <u><b>adequate knowledge of the Malay language</b></u>; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Resident for at least <b>10 out of 12</b> years preceding application</li> </ul>
	Employment	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members of any forces of the Federation who declares permanent settlement in the Federation; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Have at least 3 years' fulltime or 4 years' part-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members of any armed forces of the Federation who wish to live permanently in the Federation; <b>AND</b></li> <li>- Have at least 3 years' fulltime or 4 years' part-</li> </ul>

				time service in any such forces	time service in any such armed forces
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*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> *“Adequate knowledge” means (1) the ability to speak that language with reasonable proficiency for a person applying within 2 years from 1 Feb 1948; and (2) ability to speak that language, and unless prevented by blindness or other physical cause, read and write it in the Malay or Rumi script with reasonable proficiency.*

Sources: Sinnadurai (1978); <sup>a</sup>Colonial Office (1946a, 1946b); <sup>b</sup>Federation of Malaya (1952); <sup>c</sup>Malaya (1958); <sup>d</sup>Hickling (1985, pp. 24-25)

**Table A7.2: Loss, Deprivation and Renunciation of Citizenship**

Political entity		Malayan Union (1 Apr 1946-31 Jan 1948)	Federation of Malaya (1 Feb 1948-30 Aug 1957)		Federation of Malaysia (31 Aug 1957-16 Sept 1963)
Legislation or Constitution		Malayan Union Order in Council, 1946 <sup>a</sup>	Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948 <sup>b</sup>	Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance, 1952 <sup>c</sup>	1957 Constitution <sup>d</sup>
Loss by operation of law	Another citizenship	- Acquisition of another citizenship	-	- Acquisition of another citizenship	- Acquisition of another citizenship
	Another citizenship by marriage	-	-	- Acquisition of husband's national status on marriage	-
	Absent from territory	-	Absent for a <b>continuous period of 5 years</b> , unless: - For purposes of education - Discretion granted by the High Commissioner, on application	Absent for a <b>continuous period of 5 years</b> , or not certified by the High Commissioner to have maintained substantial connection with the Federation during the period, unless: - Discretion granted by the High Commissioner, on application	
	Disloyalty	-	- Done any voluntary act incompatible with his loyalty to the Federation	- See below	
Deprivation	False pretence OR others	-	- Citizenship granted on false representation or fraud; <b>OR</b> - Disloyal to the Federation	- Citizenship granted on false representation or fraud; <b>OR</b> - Disloyal to the Federation; <b>OR</b> ;	-

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unlawfully traded or communicated with an enemy during any war in which His Majesty is engaged after 15 Sept 1952; <b>OR</b></li> <li>- Sentenced to death or to imprisonment in any part of His Majesty's dominions or territories within 5 years after citizenship acquisition; <b>OR</b></li> <li>- Done any voluntary act incompatible with his loyalty to the Federation</li> </ul>	
Renunciation	Voluntary	-	- Declaration of divestment of citizenship	- Declaration of divestment of citizenship	

Sources: Sinnadurai (1978); <sup>a</sup>Colonial Office (1946a, 1946b); <sup>b</sup>Federation of Malaya (1952); <sup>c</sup>Malaya (1958); <sup>d</sup>Hickling (1985, pp. 24-25)



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## Appendix A8 – UK Points-Based System: Key Changes to Tiers 1, 2 and 4

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 4
Categories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Exceptional talent:</b> Recognised or with the potential to be recognised as leaders in the fields of science and arts</li> <li><b>Entrepreneur:</b> People who want to set up or take over, and be actively involved in running a business or businesses</li> <li><b>Investor:</b> People who want to make a substantial financial investment in the UK</li> <li><b>Post-study Work:</b> Recent graduates from a UK university who want to work in the UK</li> <li><b>General:</b> Highly-skilled workers already in the UK, looking for work or self-employment opportunities, to extend their stay</li> <li><b>Graduate entrepreneur:</b> People identified by UK HEIs as having developed world class innovative ideas or entrepreneurial skills to develop businesses in the UK</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>General:</b> Offered a skilled job that cannot be filled by a settled worker (exceptions for shortage occupations)</li> <li><b>Minister of Religion:</b> Offered employment or roles within their faith communities in the UK</li> <li><b>Sportsperson:</b> Elite sportspeople and coaches</li> <li><b>Intra company transfer:</b> Employees of multinational companies transferred to a UK branch of the company, under 4-sub-categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Long-term staff:</b> Transfers of more than 12 months</li> <li><b>Short-term staff:</b> Transfers of 12 months or less</li> <li><b>Graduate trainee:</b> Transfers as part of a structured graduate training programme</li> <li><b>Skills transfer:</b> Transfers to learn or impart skills and knowledge</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>General:</b> Adult student entering the UK for post-16 education</li> <li><b>Child:</b> Children between the ages of 4-17 years old entering the UK for education</li> </ol>
Key changes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Exceptional talent:</b> Opened on 9 August 2011; 1,000 visas available</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>General:</b> Annual limit at 20,700, for jobs with an annual salary below £150,000.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of funds applicants need to provide evidence of in order to meet</li> </ul>

	<p>2. <b>Investors</b> who invest large sums of money will see their right to settle permanently in the UK speeded up</p> <p>3. <b>Post-study work:</b> Closed on 5 April 2012</p> <p>5. <b>General:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From July 2010 to March 2011, limited to 600 visas issued per calendar month.</li> <li>- From 23 December 2010, closed to applicants outside the UK, and to migrants who are already here in most other immigration categories.</li> </ul> <p>6. <b>Graduate Entrepreneur:</b> Opened on 6 April 2012; 1,000 visas available for the first year</p>	<p>The current annual limit will be in place until April 2014.</p> <p>4. <b>Intra company transfer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applicant must be in occupation on graduate occupation list and be earning a specific salary</li> <li>- From 6 April 2013: Improve the flexibility for intra-company transferees and for employers carrying out the resident labour market test</li> </ul>	<p>maintenance requirements increased from 6 April 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ending switching from <b>Tier 4</b> into <b>Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)</b> unless the migrant has £50,000 funding from a specified source</li> <li>• From 6 April 2013: Allowing completing PhD students to stay in the UK for 12 months beyond the end of their course to find skilled work or to set up as an entrepreneur.</li> </ul>
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Source: Mavroudi and Warren (2013); UKBA (various, including 2010a, 2010b; 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2012, 2013a, 2013b)

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