

Marketing Academic Authenticities

at an international branch campus in
Vietnam

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National
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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at the Australian National University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jodie-Lee Trembath', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jodie-Lee Trembath

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Dedicated to my husband, Nicholas Trembath

Legend has it that in some countries, when one spouse studies for a PhD, both spouses are awarded the title of Doctor at the end. I wish that were the case in Australia, because this has been a team effort, every step of the way. Thank you for everything you do.

Go Team Trembath!

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Transcription Conventions

Convention	Meaning
...	Text has been removed
[Text in square brackets]	Text has been added for clarity or to provide extra information
<i>[Italicised text in square brackets]</i>	Denotes how the text should be read, or what has been happening during an interview eg. <i>[Pause]</i> or <i>[laughs]</i>
---	Denotes that the speaker got cut off in the middle of the sentence. Eg. Jodie: Did you--- Respondent: ---yes, I did.

Abstract

As neoliberal logics converge with the internationalisation imperative on university campuses worldwide, the nature of what it means to be an academic is changing. In an era when tenured stability in one's home country has become, for many, an unlikely dream, academics are experiencing an increasing need to be globally mobile, while many university workplaces are consequently becoming more multicultural, and more transient, than ever before. This combination of globally transient academics with neoliberal market forces has necessitated new forms of academic labour that are not often accounted for or discussed, either by universities or in the higher education management literature.

This thesis reports on ethnographic research conducted over nine months at an international branch campus of a Western university, located in Vietnam. This campus, I argue, is an extreme case of the aforementioned intersection between the forces of neoliberalisation and globalization in higher education. By undertaking extensive participant observation; shadowing individual academics for varying periods; conducting interviews with academics, their managers, other professional staff and the university's Executive Group; and conducting qualitative content analyses on internal and external university documents, I have attempted to shed some light on the nature and potential extent of these changes to academic labour.

The results of this study demonstrate that academics in a neoliberalised, globalized university are required to produce what I am calling "marketable academic authenticity". That is to say, they are employed not only to teach, research and provide service to their community, but are also expected to make themselves available as marketing materials that can be displayed to demanding potential customers: prospective students and their parents. I argue through the six body chapters of this thesis that the production of marketable academic authenticity via proxy indicators of academic quality and authenticity have come to replace the need for "actual" academic quality, or what most academics would consider to be "authentic" academic work. This production of marketable academic authenticity has one primary goal: to build prestige

and have prestige conferred upon the university by a range of stakeholders. However, the university under scrutiny in this thesis has allowed prestige-seeking activities to become their highest priority, over and above the traditional pursuits of developing young minds, creating new knowledge and reproducing disciplines.

Prestige-seeking is primarily carried out by exploiting those assets possessed by the university that are considered to be of most value to their target market. Foremost among these assets is the whiteness of their academics, and the Westernised appearance of the facilities, as proxy indicators of “world-class” quality and “authentic” international education. Of the white academics, the best placed to be indicators of quality are the white *male* academics, and best of all are white male academics who are most able to produce the kinds of academic professionalism that a Vietnamese market expects – well-dressed, well-spoken (ie. native English speakers), bearing a sense of gravitas (either via age or physical stature), who is also an entertainer in the classroom. I demonstrate how the exploitation of these proxy indicators has actually allowed this university to remain afloat through difficult financial challenges over the last five to ten years. However, while the production of marketable academic authenticity in pursuit of prestige may have been necessary for the university’s rescue, there have been other, unintended consequences of these actions, to both the academics of the campus and to the university more broadly – racism, misogyny and other structural inequalities; social and psychological strain and increased cognitive load management; and the creation of toxic work environments, to name but a few.

This study not only builds on the existing literature in Critical University Studies and Higher Education Management, but also provides a fresh view of the future that highly internationalised, neoliberalised universities may expect if they allow the need to produce marketable academic authenticity to overpower all else.

List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning in this Thesis
GTS	Good Teaching Score
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). Sometimes also referred to as Saigon, given that this was the name many of my participants used for this city.
IBC	International Branch Campus
IVU	International-Vietnamese University — the pseudonym I've given to my field site.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OMG	Oh My God
PE	President's Executive Group
USP	Unique Selling Proposition
UVP	Unique Value Proposition
WTF	What The Fuck?

Introduction Chapter

In this thesis, I argue that intersections of neoliberal ideologies and the forces of globalisation on a university campus lead to an increased need to produce what I am calling “marketable academic authenticity”; that is, they lead to an increased need to convince the university’s external stakeholders that the image of the university that they are being invited to “buy into” is a faithful, traditional, and therefore desirable version of “world-class” higher education. I further argue that the greater a university’s focus on producing marketable academic authenticity, the less focus will be centred on the more traditional aspects of academic labour production: namely research, teaching and service to the academic community.

I make these claims and answer these questions using data from my long-term ethnographic field study conducted at the pseudonymous “International-Vietnamese University” (IVU). An extreme example of the intersection between neoliberalisation and globalisation, IVU is a privately-operated international branch campus of a Western university, based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where 80% of the academic staff are “foreigners” and the diversity of staffing ranges across 28 different nationalities. As a branch campus, I argue that it amplifies the effects of this intersection, creating a “perfect storm” environment for the production of marketable academic authenticity.

International branch campuses (IBCs), much like the foreign subsidiaries of multinational corporations, are an example of the global spread of Western knowledge and practices, particularly into countries in the Global South such as China, Malaysia and Vietnam. They represent a paradox – they are on the periphery with their home campus at the centre, both in an organisational sense but also in the geographical sense, as they are usually based in developing regions, with the home campus located in a developed nation. Yet conversely, the students on international branch campuses have been shown to often have higher expectations of their university, a more customer-like outlook, and subsequently, a greater degree of power over university decision-making than their counterparts in the metropole.

Previous literature has shown that these campuses are characterised by poor retention of foreign staff as well as low employee morale. This thesis draws attention to systemic issues and problems in the global higher education sector by taking a bottom-up approach, exploring

the lived experiences of academics at an IBC in Vietnam, to better understand these higher-order structural concerns. It is my position in this thesis that IBCs are not only extreme forms of global, neoliberal academia; I contend that they provide a glimpse into the future of academia that awaits all universities heading down the global, neoliberal path. Without this knowledge, localised attempts to improve academic working life will only ever be partial and ineffective, while our understandings of the effects of these forces will continue to lack necessary context.

Therefore, in this thesis, I ask:

How are academic identities and work practices enacted at an international branch campus of a “global” university?

What kinds of identities, work practices and power relations manifest when the forces of neoliberalisation and globalisation intersect on international branch campuses (IBCs)? And;

What does this tell us about contemporary universities, academic work and academic identities?

Building on Dean MacCannell’s (1973) notion of Staged Authenticity in tourist contexts, I contend that a global, neoliberal university can come to internalise itself as a type of “staged back-region” of Western academia for a non-Western audience to gaze upon and engage with. Foreign academics are presented as props to decorate a backdrop of “world-class” Western facilities, in order to demonstrate certain facades of “authentic” Western academic-ness to prospective students and parents (read: customers). At the same time, said students and parents seek the opportunity to verify the authenticity of the university’s international credentials through particular proxy visual indicators: namely, the presence of (specifically white, and preferably male) foreign academics on staff.

For the academics at my field site, this unsettled and problematised their professional identities, values and beliefs in the nature of academic labour. That is not to say, however, that these academics either accepted the changes to their professional status without resistance, nor that they were absolute victims to a loss of agency. This thesis explores the tensions that can occur when conflicting notions of academic authenticity collide.

A Tale of Every-University?



Figure 1: Stock photo labelled “Students watching lecturer in the lab”

Before we dive into the substance of this thesis, let’s take a moment to examine the stock photo pictured above. A tall, white, older-but-still-attractive man wearing a scientist’s lab coat smiles at his bright-eyed students. For their part, the students, a multi-racial group seemingly united by their shared enjoyment of “science” (of unknown specificity), gaze adoringly back at their respected elder. Although it’s clear from the image that “science” is a serious endeavour — the technical-looking equipment, gloves and official-looking lab coats attest to that — it can apparently also be fun, amusing, engaging. This is especially so when you have the quintessential senior academic — tall, older, white and male — steering you in the right direction. And with access to the best equipment, a colourful, brightly-lit and well-resourced educational environment, and a supportive and diverse cohort of peers, your future as a university student appears assured.

Googling “lecturer with students” in 2018 brings up literally millions of images similar to the one above. Taking the first 100 from these search results gives you a sample of images that is constituted of 53% photos of white men, 22% photos of white women, 21% photos of

non-white men and only 4% photos of non-white women. Let's narrow this sample down further, so that only obvious stock photos, posed to represent an idea of universities or academia to the internet's viewing public, remain. Now, of these surviving 61 photos, 62% are of white men in brightly-lit, prestigious-looking educational environments, surrounded by multi-ethnic rainbows of smiling youths. The internet, it would seem, and the creators of stock images, believe that academics are white, male, and almost always mildly good-looking. Or perhaps, they just believe that this is what the rest of the world wants to see.

Why do stock images of university settings, such as the one pictured above, exist? In this thesis, I ask various questions to interrogate this broader observation about the state of contemporary academia. I will argue that the way in which the forces of neoliberalisation – the process of applying market-driven forces (Phelan, 2014) – and globalisation – the process of universalising and interconnecting issues, trends and developments on a global scale (Tye, 2003) – have intersected on contemporary university campuses has created conditions under which universities must “sell” a particular idea of academia to a discerning, demanding, and perhaps most importantly *paying* public. As aforementioned, I will explore, in this context, what I am calling **“marketable academic authenticity” — a phenomenon increasingly seen on these campuses in which the university’s facilities, as well as the academics themselves, are “posed” and put on display to the prospective students, parents, and other external stakeholders to represent a specific ideal of universities or academia.** And I will explore the effects that this continual push to produce marketable academic authenticity can have on the nature of academic labour and academic identities.

In 2016, I spent nine months doing fieldwork at the International-Vietnamese University (IVU), an International Branch Campus (IBC) of a Western university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and an “extreme case” (Patton, 1990) of a global, neoliberal university campus. I call it an extreme case because international branch campuses like IVU represent a more extreme version of what the average global, neoliberal university machine can be. They're often established to make money for the home university, while also increasing the global brand and the level of internationalisation that the university can claim, which in turn affects the university's global rankings (Altbach, 2013). An IBC has to internalise and manage within at least two sets of national governmental bureaucracy — that of the home nation and that of the host nation. In an era when there are increasing calls to decolonise academia, IBCs are often established in developing nations, while the home campus is usually based in a more

developed nation. Thus, unlike many anthropological studies, this thesis aims less to show the reader what makes this field site different, and more to illustrate how an IBC is like an amplified version of a neoliberal university, and therefore to “broaden the horizon of potentialities” (Fanghanel, 2012, p. 110) that *any* university headed down the path of globalised neoliberalisation may face. The things you read about IVU in this thesis *should* sound familiar. If I have done my job right, then in many ways it will leave you with the thought, “there, but for the grace of the gods of academia, goes I”.

And so, on to our tale. Two years before I arrived at IVU, the campus had come perilously close to closure due to financial difficulties. For years prior to that, and somehow without the knowledge of the majority of relevant parties, staffing costs had been steadily increasing while student enrolments (and therefore revenue) had been rapidly decreasing. The university reached a financial crisis point just as new president Elizabeth Goffman¹ (a white, middle-aged, female Professor of International Business from Australia) was appointed. The crisis had catalysed an all-encompassing combination of austerity measures (“We must reduce costs!”) and marketing initiatives (“We must increase revenue!”) that, by the time I arrived in 2016, had become the key focus of the university’s attention.

Under this regime of austerity and profit-seeking, I observed that “the student experience” was of paramount importance. However, the underlying reasons that were most commonly given for this being the case were linked to neoliberal logics: to improve “Good Teaching Scores”; to convert students into “brand ambassadors”; and ultimately, to increase student enrolments, thus increasing revenue. In everyday conversations², the traditional mission of the university as an educator of society’s next generation seemed more like a “nice-to-have”, a happy side effect of the university’s permeative marketing pursuits. Research, too, was motivated by neoliberal ideals. Research outputs were still, as they are in most contemporary universities, an essential component of the academics’ role, but not so much for the traditional purpose of filling gaps in the body of knowledge. Instead, the reason to conduct research seemed fundamentally linked to the need to fulfil research quotas that had recently been introduced by the Vietnamese government. To complete the trifecta, service tasks were

¹ This, as with all the names in this thesis, is a pseudonym. Given the importance of Goffman’s (1956) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* to the arguments of this thesis, I couldn’t resist giving him a nod in my naming of the President. See page 19 for a more thorough explanation of my reasoning for using pseudonyms.

² The majority of my observations of conversations were in English. I can speak and understand enough Vietnamese to understand basic conversations, and was taking private lessons throughout my fieldwork, but this was more for my own interest than for the necessity of my research.

similarly market-oriented, often involving participating in Open Days, or visiting high schools and career fairs to demonstrate IVU's world-class education to prospective students and their purse-holding parents.

Because of this emphasis on producing marketable academic authenticity for display to customers, there was a mismatch between what academics expected they would be doing when they came to IVU and the work with which they were often actually tasked. With their own physical presence being a cornerstone of the marketing materials being displayed, many academics questioned the role that academics played in this highly neoliberalised environment. And although most accepted that both current and prospective students and parents *wanted* the academics displayed before they would commit to purchasing such an expensive education, many still resisted the notion that the academics themselves should be involved in delivering those outcomes. Sometimes this resistance was active, with academics stridently refusing to participate in all but the most mandatory of marketing-related duties. Sometimes it was passive, involving disgruntled discussion between like-minded comrades. Not infrequently, it contributed to the university's high level of academic turnover.

I came to feel throughout my fieldwork that the academia being enacted at IVU was subtly different to what I'd seen in the five other universities I'd been involved with in one way or another over the course of my career. It is a goal of this thesis to demonstrate how these differences actually constitute an amplification of the effects of neoliberalisation and globalisation, and thus can be attributed to an excessive focus on marketable academic authenticity.

Theoretical framings

The Making of Worlds: Post-Constructivism and Ontological Politics

This thesis is underpinned by a post-constructivist epistemology, in that it rejects both naive realism and naive constructivism, preferring to explain the world and the making of reality by combining the material with the social (Knol, 2011). Consequently, I refute the notion that a university, an academic, or even a person, is a fixed entity, or a singular reality that I went into the field to observe. Following well-known post-constructivists like Annemarie Mol and John Law, and in the vein of Joelle Fanghanel's post-constructivist treatise *Being an Academic* (2012), I also conceive of the social world as both materially and historically situated, and "made of a web of complex processes and flows, subject to

interactions and overlaps,” (Fanghanel, 2012, p. 10). Like Bruno Latour (2005) and Jane Bennett (2010), I consider the actors in my field site to be anyone *or anything* that *acts* — that is to say, every human and every thing that has the power to effect some kind of change. This idea is important because although the focus of my thesis is on academic *work*, this work is never solely carried out by humans — it is always achieved via human and non-human interactions. The myth of the lone and solitary scholar has always been exactly that — a myth — for what was a medieval scholar without his books, or his robes, or his lamp by which he read within the cloistered walls of his monastery?

Thus, this work is influenced by the later iterations of Actor Network Theory, or ANT, which reminds the researcher to examine all the ways that a network is being assembled and to seek the traces of the network in all its forms, both human and non-human (Latour, 2005). A study of a university is a good illustration of this assembling process. Universities are not just a collection of buildings, nor are they merely a collection of people; instead, this thesis considers a university to be a network of intersecting “actants”, each with varying ability or power to do things and alter the course of events (Bennett, 2010). An actant might be a physical space or spaces, the academic and non-academic staff, the students, the food and beverage providers, the foods and beverages themselves (no-one who has observed an academic seeking coffee in the morning could possibly doubt the power that a beverage has to alter the course of events, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 1), the books, the ideas within the books, the policies that exist to attempt to control and govern “the university”, the ideas people have about these policies, the technologies that people use to navigate their experiences on and off campus – one could literally keep going on forever, because, as has been pointed out, it can be difficult to know where to cut the network (Strathern, 1996).

Because the network is constantly being assembled on a moment-to-moment basis, it is inherently malleable, although it may appear extremely stable and durable to both the network’s actants and those ostensibly external to the network. In the case of the university network, there are many actant intersections that appear highly durable as they have been assembling in similar ways for hundreds of years – the intersections of a student, a black gown, a floppy hat, the university’s Chancellor, a stage and a rolled up sheet of paper have, for example, been doing the work of creating new doctors of philosophy since medieval times. However, even this network-within-a-network is not as durable as it appears on the surface, because in addition to the visible actants described above, there are many invisible

intersections hidden from the view of the observer. What the casual observer (who, naturally, is yet another actant) is unlikely to detect at a graduation ceremony, for example, are the many people who undertook months of event management, or the computers, smart phones, and laptops that have been used to store, collate, curate and mediate the data about the event, the speakers, the students graduating, the members of the academic procession etc. etc. Law (2004) calls these hidden parts of the network “the hinterland”, using the analogy of the agricultural processes that must occur (usually in the physical hinterlands of a region or country) in order to bring a plate of food to a dining table. Because we cannot see these hidden parts of the network, we may also miss the myriad ways that the network assemblage has changed since medieval times, demonstrating that it is not in fact as stable as it appears on the surface.

This thesis is also heavily influenced by Annemarie Mol’s (1999) notion of ontological politics, through which I contend that the objects, ideas, and identities observable at IVU, and that constitute IVU are the effects of *practices*, and therefore only emerge into existence during the times when those practices are being performed. What that means for my argument is this: IVU has thoroughly turned its focus towards a particular goal — the production of marketable academic authenticity as a selling point to promote IVU to customers in order to increase revenue. In doing so, the discourses and material practices being enacted on the campus also become focused on this goal. Consequently, if IVU is constantly being made, dismantled and remade depending on the practices being performed, then the IVU being made will be primarily constituted of practices that market the university. This focus on marketing the university, more often than is comfortable for many of the academics, comes at the expense of practices that educate students, produce new knowledge or continue to develop the academic community.

Thus, ontological politics was very obviously evident to me while I conducted my fieldwork, though I didn’t know to call it ontological politics at the time. I frequently remarked in Skype calls to my supervisor that, “it’s as if there are multiple IVUs existing at the same address. If you didn’t know up front, you would never guess from talking to them that person X and person Y even worked at the same place”. I contend, then, that there *are* multiple IVUs, multiple academies, and multiple enactments of prestige, whiteness, masculinity, professionalism and academic identity, popping in and out of existence in the multiple IVU contexts.

Before we go further, let's unpack the underlying constructs of this argument. The term ontological politics, coined by Dutch medical anthropologist and "empirical philosopher" Annemarie Mol (1999), refers to the notion that what is "real" is not fixed; it changes over time, and there can even be multiple versions of reality occurring at once. Perhaps even more radically, the "politics" part of ontological politics implies that these changes are based on how reality is being enacted (by both humans and non-humans) in any particular context. Realities, objects and constructs pop in and out of "existence" depending on how and where they have been called into being, and performed.

In her original paper on ontological politics, within John Law and John Hassard's *Actor Network Theory and After*, Mol (1999) gives anaemia as an example of a construct that is actually multiple because it is performed in different ways in different contexts, and a brief overview of this example may be useful in further unpacking my argument. In a clinical context, anaemia is a set of symptoms that can be described by a patient and/or observed by a doctor. Conversely, in a laboratory context, anaemia is (usually) a "low" haemoglobin level within a patient's extracted blood, as measured by machines — none of which could have been observed or described by the doctor and patient in the clinical setting. In a third (pathophysiological)³ context, however, haemoglobin may be measured as normal compared to a statistical norm, but the patient may have clinical symptoms of anaemia. Then the doctor may have to determine, for this individual patient, whether the haemoglobin level is high enough to transport oxygen through the body effectively enough for continued functioning. The results of these tests may fall above or below the statistical norms — statistically, no anaemia is present — but irrespective of this, in the pathophysiological context, anaemia is the discovery that the patient's body will not continue to function properly if these results are not acted upon.

Mol's radical move is to say that *three* different anaemias are being enacted here — a clinical anaemia, a statistical anaemia and a pathophysiological anaemia. These multiple anaemias are not a single entity being viewed from multiple perspectives using a single, consistent label, as perspectivalists and standpoint theorists might argue, because ontological

³ pathophysiology [-fiz'ē·ol'əjē] Etymology: Gk, pathos, disease, physis, nature, logos, science
The study of the biological and physical manifestations of disease as they correlate with the underlying abnormalities and physiological disturbances. Pathophysiology does not deal directly with the treatment of disease. Rather, it explains the processes within the body that result in the signs and symptoms of a disease. pathophysiological, adj.
(Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 9th edition. © 2009, Elsevier.)

politics assumes that reality is something that is created and enacted, not something that exists independently and can therefore be objectively observed from one perspective or another. And, despite the inconvenient occurrence of the three enactments of anaemia sometimes contradicting one another, the medical community, for the most part, is unconcerned about this and continues to see a single, consistent “anaemia” reality. Mol argues, on the contrary, that these are multiple anaemias that spring into being, depending on how and where those anaemias are being performed, and by what and whom.

In this example, Mol demonstrates how realities are made in the moment, and how they change from moment to moment. When the various constituent parts (“the actants”) come together to create a particular moment in time, then that reality is made possible. But as soon as one of those actants is removed, a different reality is created — the previous one is no longer possible because it was reliant on that specific set of actants working together. So the label “anaemia”, being an indexical icon, a single consistent label that points to the different symptoms in different contexts, is one of those actants. When you combine that label with a doctor's office, plus a doctor and a patient, that combination creates one “reality of anaemia” — not just a word or label, but a material reality.

Then, that network dissolves: the patient takes a piece of paper (probably with a shorthand signifier of the anaemia label on it) to a lab, and a phlebotomist draws blood. In that location, the material reality of anaemia is very unstable — is it anaemia? Is it something else? Only the blood itself “knows” at that point whether the test results will come back indicating statistically low hemoglobin levels. None of the other actants knows, so the reality of anaemia is contested and contestable in that space. When the machines and chemicals that do the testing combine with the blood sample, and the test results come back to one of the human actants — a lab technician or the doctor who ordered the tests — then another new reality forms. Now, we have a combination of the doctor's eyes that can read the test results, her/his brain that can interpret them, the doctor's memories of the patient's complaints, the doctor's notes from the original consult, and the new piece of paper with the lab results on it that either confirm or deny the label “anaemia”. So it's not only that there is a new anaemia there; it's that there is a different reality entirely because reality is only made *in the moment* by the set of actants that are entangled in *that* moment.

Perhaps that seems like splitting hairs — why should we care, in practical terms, whether a new situation creates a whole new reality or whether time marches on in a linear fashion and there is only one reality but changed circumstances or perspectives?

For our purposes in this thesis, however, it is a useful distinction. If there are multiple realities being enacted all over a university like IVU, created out of different combinations of actants, then it actually makes logical sense that Academic A experiences a different reality of IVU than Academic B, and a *very* different reality of IVU than Senior Executives A or B. The actants that different academics have access to, and would be entangled with, vary wildly. Further, there would be some, such as confidential information about how finances work at IVU, that the academics would never come in contact with. However, if they did, it could *radically* change their reality; not only their view of their reality, which would probably change too but their material reality, because that knowledge, as an actant, could change their practices, which could then shape entirely new worlds.

Initially, this multiplicity made it difficult to analyse what I thought I was seeing in my field site — I often questioned whether I was going mad. But seeing these differing and often contradicting realities through the lens of ontological politics allowed me to question the differing social worlds I was observing within IVU, and ask “who has the power in this social world? And how does it serve them to enact IVU (or whatever else I was observing at the time) into being in this way, at this time?”

I use ontological politics in this thesis to show how these multiple versions of five specific constructs — prestige, whiteness, masculinity, academic professionalism and organisational crisis — can be enacted in completely different ways, in different contexts, to mean different things and to achieve different goals. Far from being merely an approach to my data, or a methodological concern, the multiplicity of the constructs at IVU is critical to my argument.

Bourdieu and Classifying IVU as a Contested Field

As previously discussed, post-constructivism, and specifically Mol’s work, have allowed me to show how IVU (and the actors that constitute IVU) are constantly being enacted into and out of existence; are unstable; and are characterised by power struggles both internally to IVU and further afield. It is to these struggles for power that I now wish to turn, using

Bourdieu's Field Theory and several of its accompanying core concepts of fields, capital, habitus and doxa.

For Bourdieu, a field is a relatively autonomous, highly structured manifestation of social agents (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30) that has specific rules and ways of being determining the way that agents within the field behave with and towards each other. Fields vary in size, scope and power, and overlap or are nested within each other. In the case of this thesis, I have analysed IVU as an "organisation-as-field", as Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p. 22) have described it, broadening the scope of Bourdieu's original concept of "the firm as a field" (Bourdieu, 2005 [2000], p. 205) and seeking to "enter the 'black box' that is [the university, to] find not individuals, but, once again, a structure," (Bourdieu, 2005 [2000], p. 205). IVU is, however, a field nested with many other fields – the field of higher education, for example, as well as *several* "fields of power" (Bourdieu, 1984), constituted by a society's political and economic fields. Because IVU is a Western university situated in Vietnam, it thus operates within two, often conflicting fields of power – that of Vietnam's political (communist) and economic (as a socialist-oriented market economy) fields, as well as those of the home campus's country – which, although I do not identify this country in this thesis for reasons of confidentiality, can be described politically as a democracy, and as having a mixed-market economy with some degree of state intervention and government regulation. Thus, IVU internalises these struggles between these competing fields of power; for example, when lecturers find themselves trying to teach the home campus's curriculum and this includes discussions of free speech, academic freedom or democracy; concepts that foreign academics are (ostensibly at least) legally prohibited from teaching to Vietnamese students within Vietnam.

Within any field, there are elites (Bourdieu, 1984) who interpret and legitimate the various practices and representations made within the field by the agents of the field⁴. But any field is also marked by struggles that constantly modify these internal power balances, as the various agents battle for the power to interpret the field in a way most beneficial to them. At IVU, this struggle for legitimacy can be observed in the differing habitus of the "old guard" academics, who had been with IVU for many years, compared to the academics who had been hired following a major restructure in 2014. Habitus can be defined as a system of enduring, embodied dispositions and ways of behaving that can be used in and transferred across

⁴ There is an irony here in that Bourdieu was actually writing about academics as being elite and having an excess of power and capital. As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, the power and capital at IVU has shifted from academics to managers, making THEM the new elites.

multiple contexts. These dispositions influence both how an individual sees, evaluates and classifies the world around them and what they then *do* with those observations, evaluations and classifications (Bourdieu, 1990). Individuals who operate within the same fields, or from the same social class, often have similarities in habitus, which makes them recognisable to others within that field, and sets them apart from those in other fields or from those within the same field with whom they are in a struggle for power and legitimacy. While it is durable and long-lasting, a person's habitus can change and adapt to new fields and new circumstances. At IVU, many of the academics who had been working on the campus for many years shared a habitus influenced by notions of the value of the "pracademic" (Panda, 2014) – that is to say that the university's messaging had always in the past been about the value they had as recent industry practitioners, rather than for their capacity as researchers in the more traditional academic sense. However, as the university changed, so too did the requirements on academics, and many of the new academics being hired from 2014 onwards held a much more traditional academic habitus in terms of their views of research (cultural capital), the qualifications they held (symbolic capital) and their embeddedness within the global system of higher education (social capital). Thus, the campus's doxa – the set of presuppositions that agents hold about a field that seem natural, and thus usually remain unquestioned – had started to be upturned when I was there in 2016, causing major disruption to the field and bringing into contest what academic authenticity "really" was.

Although I would not classify this thesis as a Bourdieuan analysis by any means, these notions are used in an explanatory manner, in an attempt to illuminate and explain various aspects of my observations and analyses of IVU's drive towards marketable academic authenticity.

Organising Emotions and Affective Atmospheres

Although this thesis is interested in materiality, the effects of affect have not been underestimated. The definition of affect on which I rely derives from the work of anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin (2009), who has persuasively argued that affect should not only be considered subjective or related to an individual's emotions; it is an energy that can gather in objects and spaces as well as people, and be exuded from and by any of these three. Navaro-Yashin's arguments are made regarding Turkish communities whose recent ancestors had invaded Cypress. However, I found her exploration of melancholy that lingers in the objects and spaces left behind by the fleeing Greek-Cypriots to be resonant with the

capacity for IVU's spaces and objects to exude various affects, even while the humans who populate those spaces come and go with increasing frequency.

My reliance on this definition of affect is in addition to, though not in contradiction of, Nigel Thrift's (2004) observations about spatial affect in his paper, "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect", in which he argued that increasingly, spaces are being, "designed to invoke affective response according to practical and theoretical knowledges that have been derived from and coded by a host of sources," (p. 68). IVU has indeed been carefully designed to produce affective responses in both current and prospective student- and parent-customers. However, the way my academic participants spoke about the way the space *felt*, and made *them* feel, did not resonate with the apparent intentions behind the design choices. They spoke, in their own words of course, of what Anderson (2009, p.77) might call "affective atmospheres", and I have referred to at times in this thesis as "affective swirls" – speaking, for example, of the "sense of dread in the room" during a particularly "heavy" town hall meeting. Of the "eeriness" of a staffroom that had been overflowing with academics one day, then cleared out of said academics when they were displaced to a new location the next. Of being able to "cut the tension in there with a knife" while overhearing two colleagues having an argument.

In a paper that has had a significant impact on the thinking for this thesis, Christian Borch (2009) sought to understand the material impact of affective atmospheres on organisational spaces. Combining theories from philosophy, biology and architecture, Borch argues that an organisational atmosphere is constituted by the affect that is exuded from both people and objects within a space, as well as the space itself, in the form of various chemical and biochemical substances that mingle and create a mimetic response amongst the sentient beings in the room. He thus contends that organisations would be advantaged if they were more consciously aware of the politics of organisational atmospheres:

This politics has two major concerns. One is to shape the material spaces of the organization so that specific affects are encouraged and transmitted throughout the organization. This kind of politics may focus on architecture, aesthetic design, temperatures, smells, lights and other mechanisms to stimulate the desired impressions. But it may also focus on how atmospheres are created by more psycho-social means, say, by attempts to evoke a particular team spirit. (Borch, 2009, p. 236)

Thus, this thesis (and particularly Chapter 6, which focuses on discourses of crisis) is attentive to the ways that organisational affective atmospheres have influenced the ways that academics and others have come to understand their particular social worlds.

The Presentation of Academics in Expatriate Life

To make a final, brief note on the theoretical framework underpinning this piece of work; in many (though not all) ways, this thesis provides a dramaturgical analysis in the Goffmanian sense, seeking to elucidate how academics present themselves to themselves, to each other, to students and to external stakeholders, and often conversely, how the university presents them in these same contexts. In addition to Goffman's foundational ideas about front and back stage areas from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, I have also followed the tradition of other dramaturgical ethnographers such as Arlie Russel Hochschild in her work on emotional labour from *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983/2012), which I have used to explore notions of academic professionalism and the strain that producing this puts on academics that have just moved to a new country. As previously discussed, I draw on Dean MacCannell, in his explications of staged authenticity in *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976/1999), to understand how universities stage and display proxy indicators of authentic Western academia to their discerning student- and parent-customers. And I have been influenced by Elizabeth Bernstein's work on bounded authenticity in *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity and the Commerce of Sex* (2007), which I've used to theorise the power that a student-customer has to control and manage their relationships with their lecturers, and the emotional labour that academics must do to ensure they do not cross these invisible boundaries. Like Hochschild (1983/2012), I work from the premise that the enactments of self being produced by the academics and others at IVU were not necessarily fake, that the emotion being produced in different contexts can actually be genuinely felt, even if that emotion has to be produced in order to fit the norms of the environment. However, like Hochschild and also Bernstein (2007), I concur that the energy required to produce emotions on command, and the alienation that can be experienced when one sells that production of emotion in exchange for a wage, are elements of professional life worthy of further exploration in the context of academia.

What this Thesis is About: Unpacking “Marketable Academic Authenticity”

This thesis explores the effects of globalised neoliberalisms and neoliberal globalisations. I have pluralised these concepts because, as cultural studies scholar Sean Phelan (2014) puts forth in his book *Neoliberalism, Media and The Political*, I do not think of neoliberalism or globalisation as fixed entities; like any other construct, they are multiple and contestable notions that are constituted by a series of logics:

[Neoliberalisation is] the process where market-based logics and practices, especially logics of market determinism, commodification, individualisation, competitive ritual and self-interest, are dialectically internalised and generated in particular social regimes. (Phelan, 2014, p. 57)

The application of these neoliberal logics to the public sector has had a range of effects, not least upon contemporary universities. Researchers of higher education, and especially in Critical University Studies, have expended veritable vats of ink discussing the changes to higher education due to marketisation and privatisation; Marginson and Considine, writing about the move towards enterprise universities in Australia for example, claimed back in the year 2000 that “a revolution is well under way” (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 3). Nearly 20 years on from this, and 40-odd years since Margaret Thatcher first introduced neoliberalism to the higher education sector in Britain, the literature consistently agrees that this revolution has been wildly successful.

In *Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*, one of the earlier book-length examinations of the growing passion for auditing within neoliberal societies, Michael Power described how audit processes and outcomes could become “decoupled” from the realities of an organisation. Rather than accurately representing the actions and results an organisation was producing, these processes were instead “rationalised rituals of inspection, which produce comfort, and hence, organisational legitimacy... audit concerns itself with auditable *form* rather than *substance*” (Power, 2000, p. 98, my emphasis). In a similar vein, STS scholars Escobar and Demeritt (2017) used the idea of decoupling to explore the use of paperwork as a technology that shapes behaviours not by causing people to do their substantive work differently, but instead by changing the way they record/report on the work they do. The authors identify two key forms of decoupling that can occur in the context they explore — farming — the first being a decoupling of policy from practice, and the second, the decoupling of the means of doing things from the end that is reported. This is not to say that policies are somehow less

real than practices, nor that the ends that are reported do not have power because they are not entirely aligned with the processes that achieved them – the opposite in fact, as power has its own realities. But through this decoupling process, the various realities of policy, process, means and ends have become multiple, making it difficult for different actors within an organisation to communicate in the same language.

Anthropologists of higher education Cris Shore and Susan Wright (2000, in Marilyn Strathern's edited volume *Audit cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*) point out that the ways in which auditing technologies shape people and organisations are not (as Michael Power suggests) merely an imperfect set of processes that are otherwise benign, but instead are a highly coercive form of governance with “disastrous social consequences” (2000, p. 85). In this thesis, I will argue that one of these consequences is that the essence of audit has invaded not just the internal organisation of IVU, but also the way in which it presents itself externally. This implies that a future, superficial representation of IVU's reality that is decoupled from the actions, behaviours and practices that are occurring to enact IVU at any given moment, is of greater importance to the existence and perpetuation of the university than those actions, behaviours and enactments are themselves. The form has come to replace the substance.

This idea was best summed up by one of my key informants, Welsh lecturer Carl. A fan of British satire, he often quoted movies or television shows to me as a way to self-theorise his observations of the modern neoliberal university, particularly as he saw it at IVU. On one occasion, he inadvertently summed up what has come to be the central message of my thesis by describing a Terry Gilliam sketch called *The Miracle of Flight*⁵:

It's about the human obsession with flight. A king gathers all his top scientists together so that they can find the solution to human flight, but instead of using them to work on the problem, instead he boots each one off the top of a cliff, yelling 'Fly!', determined that, you know, if he says they are flying, they will, therefore, *be flying*. As each one plunges to his death, the king hums and haws, pondering why his 'experiments' don't seem to be having quite the desired effect, but in spite of this, he just keeps booting them off — [*miming kicking someone off a cliff*] 'Fly!' Boot. 'Fly! Fly! Fly!' Boot boot boot.

And that starts to get very warm as to what's been going on here in the university; 'Research!'

⁵ I later found this sketch on Youtube. It can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=LMpXUd_kesA or google “Terry Gilliam The Miracle of Flight”

Boot. 'Research!' Boot. Or, you know, 'Teach!' Boot. And there is this fantasy that, you know, by making these huge statements, that things will actually happen.

And then [in the sketch] there was a great thing that happened in 1643 or something [*pause for dramatic effect, looks at me significantly*]. The airline ticket was invented! And shortly after that, in-flight movies, and seatbelts, and seatbelt signs were invented. Somebody invented the airport, and everything is there. And then you see this businessman, you know, going along on, like, a traveller or whatever it is, towards the gate, and he's got his boarding pass and he's at Gate Number 3, and the man takes his ticket or whatever and he goes through the doors, and he stops [*pause*]. And then there is this big boot that boots him off, and it's the king's boot, you know, it's actually the same castle, and we realise nothing has changed, nobody's learned anything at all.

And, that's the modern university, right? We have the in-flight movies, we have the air ticket — we *literally* have the branding — but the fundamentals, the teaching and the research, the actual academic work, the thing that should be this place's bread and butter, that gets forgotten.

Carl — lecturer, white, male, early-60s

This concept of an organisation in which the substantive work has been forgotten is explored by anthropologist Tess Lea (2008) in her ethnography *Bureaucrats and Bleeding Hearts: Indigenous Health in Northern Australia*. Lea describes her field site, the Territory Health Service, as a self-replicating organisation, in which the attempts at coordinating and communicating between all the various Northern Territory Health-related agencies, offices and tasks have almost become ends in themselves. They have virtually overtaken the substantive mandate of the organisation, which is to reduce the gap between Aboriginal health outcomes and those of the majority of other Australians. The bureaucracy itself creates as much need for the organisation to perpetuate its own existence as does the public health work. At IVU, I saw — and had described to me many times, by Carl and many others — a similar phenomenon, except that rather than this perpetuation being linked to bureaucracy, it was instead tied up with marketing the organisation externally. Therefore, throughout this thesis I argue that the need to produce marketable academic authenticity is non-substantive — perpetuating the university's existence, merely for the sake of it continuing to exist, has become fundamental within a neoliberal higher education sector. This, I suggest, is an extension of the audit culture that is also so intertwined with neoliberal logics. Audit culture, as Shore and Wright (2000) point out, is a form of ritual that is performative:

These staged events [formal audits of universities] have acquired all the characteristics of what Abeles (1988) calls 'modern political ritual': formalised, choreographed, theatrical and ideologically loaded. The enhanced performance induced by audit, with its pressure to play to the gallery, is thus of a very different kind to that intended by the government. (Shore & Wright, 2000, p. 72)

In this passage, Shore and Wright make a fundamental point about audit culture — that the results of an audit of quality come to stand in for, and in the place of, actual quality. So long as a university can produce the metrics that indicate educational excellence, then they are no longer required to deliver substantive educational excellence.

However, at IVU I would argue that this representation of quality went beyond the culture of audit, beyond a university's staff having to account for their actions to the university, or of a university having to account for its outcomes to a higher power like a board or a government agency. In audit culture, quality is quantified, and specific measures of quality are numerically tested against specified standards. However, the need to produce marketable academic authenticity does not require this level of specificity. The goal of producing marketable academic authenticity is to *promote* a real-life, "world-class" Western academic experience, primarily to external stakeholders. These stakeholders, in addition to the Vietnamese government, are predominantly current and prospective students and parents, otherwise known as *customers* (or more specifically when referring only to students, *student-customers* — Finney & Finney, 2010). Compliance with the standards of quality expected by these various external stakeholders doesn't require meeting the kind of quantitative metrics that audit culture usually implies. Instead, prospective parents, students, and the Vietnamese government rely more on proxy indicators: the facilities; the demographics of the academic staff; the appearance of compliance (as opposed to actual evidence of compliance) with government requirements. All these indicators stand in for, and in place of, the metrics that had already come to stand in for, and in place of, actual educational quality.

So how does all of this relate to my idea of marketable academic authenticity? Anxieties about the non-substantive nature of the kind of academia being enacted for prospective Vietnamese students and parents at the other end were pervasive at my fieldsite. As discussed, a critical aspect of this neoliberalised, globalised university context was the highly market-conscious environment, in which academics were constantly aware that they were on display to the Vietnamese community as (to varying degrees, depending on the individual) the

“ideal” foreign academic. Further, they knew that this – they – were the good to be “sold” by IVU, that provided it’s “USP” — it’s Unique Selling Proposition⁶, compared to Vietnamese universities. As anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff (2009) pointed out in their analysis of the commodification of cultural identities, *Ethnicity Inc.*:

Those who seek to brand their otherness, to profit from what makes them different, find themselves having to do so in the universally recognizable terms in which difference is represented, merchandised, rendered negotiable by means of the abstract instruments of the market: money, the commodity, commensuration, the calculus of supply and demand, price, branding. (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009, p. 24).

However, at IVU, it was not as much the foreign academics who wished to brand their otherness to “the market”; it was their employing university who wished to market them, and the Vietnamese market that, so I was repeatedly told, demanded that this be done.

With this in mind, I’ve built on sociologist of tourism Dean MacCannell’s (1976/1999) notion of staged authenticity to help unpack these notions of marketable academic authenticity. In his 1976 book *The Tourist*, MacCannell elaborated a Goffman-inspired theory of the “backstage” of the tourism industry, wherein tour companies would work with certain locals to create a particular kind of backstage, behind-the-scenes type of experience for tourists who could then feel that they had seen and experienced something “authentic”. In his more recent book, *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, MacCannell (2011) continues this discussion:

The odd social engineering I found in tourist settings involved the pretentious revelation of “back region” procedures, even “secrets”. Guides regale tourists with tales of “authentic tradition” ...Tourists for their part, are endlessly fascinated by society’s id. (MacCannell, 2011, p. 13)

He points out, however, that the downside of this tourism trend is that staged authenticity provokes, “the tendency [of both tourists and tour operators] to view native peoples as just another component of the local landscape, or nothing more than scenery to be gazed upon and photographed” (MacCannell, 2011, p. 10). Although “staged authenticity” is a theory of tourism, it is apt in the environment of an international branch campus in a country like

⁶ Unique Selling Proposition or USP is a commonly used marketing term to identify what differentiates one brand from its competitors. See <https://www.jillkonrath.com/sales-blog/bid/153624/Elevator-Speech-vs-Unique-Selling-Proposition-vs-Value-Proposition> for more details.

Vietnam where “the West” is, to some extent at least, idolised — or at the very least, where the university’s staff, both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese — believe this to be true.

MacCannell published an article in 2008 titled “Why it never really was about authenticity” in which he scathingly responded to dissenters of his work who claimed that he was attempting to essentialise authenticity into an objective reality:

It should not take a virtuoso reader to discover that just because I observed staged authenticity doesn’t mean I believe in authenticity...In social life, what is real and what is show, what is authentic and what is inauthentic can have no ultimate standing. (MacCannell, 2008, p. 335)

Like MacCannell, I am also not claiming that there is some version of academia, or of the academic profession, that is objectively authentic. Vannini and Williams (2009/2016), support this notion, positing that authenticity is socially constructed and therefore malleable:

Authenticity may be seen as some sort of ideal, highly valued and sought by individuals and groups as part of the process of becoming. Alternatively, authenticity is often something strategically invoked as a marker of status or method of social control...it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. (Vannini & Williams, 2009/2016, p. 3)

This definition aligns with my claims that different people on the IVU campus believed in the authenticity of their own preconceived versions of academic authenticity, and that this did not often match with what IVU was projecting about academia outwardly to its external stakeholders, or inwardly to its staff. The tensions that this created, the sometimes-unintended consequences of these tensions, and the subsequent anxieties that these tensions produced, are key areas of exploration for this thesis.

It should be noted that, from this point forward, I will use the terms “marketable academic authenticity” and “marketable authenticity” interchangeably, as any three-word term is a mouthful. The exception to this will be in the concluding chapter, where I will explore how the term marketable authenticity *could* travel across into other contexts beyond academia.

What This Thesis Will Do

As an ethnography of practice, this thesis uses data gathered from my own observations, whether they be observations of practices, of individuals giving me interviews, of texts, or even of the bodies of literature related to my field. From these, I have produced reams of what

Coles and Thomson (2016, p. 263) call “inbetween writing”; the writing done to help an ethnographer make sense of their observations. Nonetheless, my analysis is not intended to be an objective representation of IVU. As sociologist of higher education Eva Bendix Petersen describes in explaining her use of ethno-drama as a method:

One of the central aims of post-realist representational strategies is to displace the author as ‘the master of truth and justice’ (Lather 1991). Using representational strategies traditionally associated with art (whatever that is) is a way of foregrounding the possibility of multiple readings, of inviting diverse readings and of displacing the authority of the author’s analysis. (Petersen, 2009, p. 145)

Like Petersen, I also invite other readings of the data I provide here, hoping only that, were my participants to read my account, they would recognise their workplace and find my arguments persuasive, even if they do not agree with all of my analyses. For I am not attempting to prove something new about academia conclusively — that is too broad a task for any PhD thesis. I am, however, hoping that readers will learn things that will challenge them to think about contemporary academia differently. In arguing for the value of case studies, Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) posits that the real value of the case is not in proving or generalising, but in allowing the reader to speculate and, ideally, learn. Thus, I have modelled my own approach in this thesis based on these notions of narrative as data. I present that data across six substantive chapters.

In *Chapter 1: IVU Land and Surrounds*, I introduce you to “IVU-Land” — a name that many of my participants, specifically the foreign academics, used for IVU, to indicate that they basically “lived in IVU-Land and visited Vietnam on weekends”. Their experience of working at the university was all-encompassing and therefore also heavily entangled with their identities, both as foreigners and as academics. This contributed significantly to the tensions between the academics’ expectations of what authenticity meant on a university campus, and what the university was trying to sell. This orienting chapter provides both an introduction to the fieldsite and the methods I used there, as well as an introduction to the relevant literature that informs this thesis.

In *Chapter 2: Producing Authenticity, Seeking Prestige and Marketing to the Masses*, I will explore the *desired* outcome of marketable academic authenticity — prestige. The majority of this thesis focuses more on the unintended consequences of IVU’s efforts to produce marketable authenticity. However, in Chapter 2 we will unpack what would motivate IVU as

an institution to conduct these efforts with such vigour that they often become the campus's highest priority. I will argue that IVU needs to be constantly in pursuit of prestige (by producing marketable academic authenticity) because, contrary to the perceptions of most of IVU's academics, these relentless prestige-seeking activities are essential for IVU's survival in Vietnam.

Chapter 3: Performing Whiteness seeks to understand the role of ethnoracial whiteness and white capital at IVU, the work that is done to construct the campus as a white institution, and why these efforts might be considered so critical. I argue that the university's perceived need to produce marketable authenticity makes enactments of whiteness more valued and valuable than intellect, teaching ability or research prowess, and that whiteness is used at IVU as a proxy indicator that replaces the need to demonstrate academic quality to prospective students and parents. This chapter argues that the white academics at IVU are, in some ways and contexts, more valued for being white people than for being good academics. This both privileges them, giving them a form of celebrity status on campus, affording them (and foreign academics more generally) higher pay than their Vietnamese counterparts, and making it much more likely that students will "cut them slack". However, it also makes these academics a source of exploitation for the university in ways that make their own whiteness more visible to them than most have ever previously experienced.

Building on these notions of celebrity and prestige from the previous chapter, *Chapter 4: A Safe Space for Misogyny? Exploring Masculine Privilege and Anxiety* examines one of the unintended outcomes and consequences of the drive towards marketable authenticity on an international branch campus – that being the privileging of white masculinity, and the ensuing misogyny that can then be catalysed. Universities have traditionally been predominantly masculine spaces, and proponents of neoliberalism in universities often cite the neoliberal turn as a driver towards greater equity and accessibility in academia. While I do not argue against this, I provide an alternative perspective to this view of neoliberal universities. I demonstrate how a focus on marketable authenticity in this context both allows and encourages men to privilege other men who uphold white masculinity as the dominant construct in the space, while simultaneously restricting, constraining, and even punishing people who do not adhere to this way of thinking.

In *Chapter 5: Professionalism at Work*, I will explore the effect that the focus on marketable authenticity at IVU had on academic identities and notions of professionalism, and the ways that academics market their own academic authenticity to each other and to the university. I argue that the various people and groups at IVU each discuss professionalism using the same word —professionalism — but they mean different things by it. The academics are referring to the codes and values of the academic profession. The non-academics, on the other hand, are referring to what counts as “professional conduct” in a workplace. Thus, producing different types of professionalism in different contexts gives or denies academics access to different types of capital. This is where I will introduce what I am calling “concealment work” — the work of concealing the chaos brought on by moving to a new country in order to produce a necessary *facade* of professionalism when the work of producing actual professionalism becomes too overwhelming. I argue that the effective performance of the right kind of professionalism, combined with the academic’s intersectionality, can lead to better outcomes for some academics than others.

Chapter 6: How Marketable Authenticity Creates Discourses of Crisis, the final body chapter, argues that the focus on marketable academic authenticity at IVU contributes to the multiple and pervasive discourses of crisis on the campus. The crisis discourses manifest in various ways, from individual crises to the perpetual discourse that higher education is in a state of crisis. I introduce three kinds of crisis discourse: that of the chaos of moving to a new country and starting at a new workplace (chaos discourse), that of a traumatic workplace event (breakage discourse) and that of the culture of workaholism that is pervasive throughout higher education (overwork discourse). I argue that the latter two discourses are used as a form of resistance to the discourse of success and continual improvement that IVU conveys both to external and internal stakeholders. I contend that IVU is a particularly pernicious environment for newly arrived academics. Finally, I discuss the consequences that these discourses have for the academic staff and for the university.

In the concluding chapter, in addition to summing up the arguments of this thesis, I aim to provide the reader with a clear definition of marketable authenticity as a useful, and potentially transferrable, construct. According to organisational scholar and ex-editor of the *Academy of Management Review*, Roy Suddaby (2010), a good definition does three things: captures the essence and character of the phenomena being considered; ensures that none of the terms used to describe the construct is part of the construct itself (for example, saying that

authenticity is the act of being authentic); and provides the essential characteristics of the construct. By determining these scope conditions, I hope to leave the reader with a final sense of clarity about what marketable authenticity is, how it can be used, and what it means for contemporary higher education.

What This Thesis Will Not Do

Despite being set in a university, this thesis is not about students, or pedagogy, excepting as to how these pertain to the experience of being an academic. This, I know, is something of a controversial move and risks treating students as props in a drama in which the academics are the stars (ironic, given my argument). It should be noted that my participants, both academics and non-academics, did not see the students as peripheral in the way that I treat them here. The needs of students were top of mind for most IVU staff across the university, even when the ostensible motivations for that seemed more related to promoting the university. However, to explore academic labour practices, my focus necessarily narrowed to the experiences of academics and those staff whose own position affected or shaped academic labour practices. This is not, therefore, an ethnography of a whole university community. It is an “ethnography of practice” (Nicolini, 2009) and specifically, of the practices that create the effects of marketable academic authenticity, academic identity and academic labour, either to make them look fixed, singular and durable or to destabilise that durability.

This thesis will also not use real names. IVU, like all other names in this thesis, is a pseudonym. Further, the university represented in this thesis as IVU has been subtly reshaped in my descriptions using characteristics from all four of the existing international universities in Ho Chi Minh City⁷. This is both to protect the confidentiality of my university field site, as agreed when they granted me permission to undertake my observations there, and also to protect the confidentiality of my individual participants. Academic mobility has increased substantially over the last 20 years in line with globalisation and the internationalisation of many university curricula (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009), and as a consequence, more academics than ever before are moving abroad to continue their academic careers. Thus, the chances that you, the reader, have met one of my participants is actually quite high, and it is therefore exceedingly important to me that my participants’ privacy be respected.

⁷ Ho Chi Minh City will sometimes be referred to in this thesis using its most common Anglophone acronym, HCMC, but may also on occasion be referred to as Saigon, as many Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese in the city do still refer to it as such. If I am quoting a Vietnamese person’s writing, it may also be referred to with the acronym Tp.HCM, which stands for Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. This is the Vietnamese translation of Ho Chi Minh City.

Gaye Tuchman (2009), sociologist of universities and author of *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*, undertook several years of periodic fieldwork at the university she describes, and discusses her own attempts to a) maintain the anonymity of the university, and b) ward off curious colleagues and academic friends who spent much of that period probing her to try to work out what university she was studying. She made changes to the characteristics of the state and town the university is located in, the university itself, and of her key informants — to the extent that she sent part of a chapter to one of her participants to read, and in his feedback he mentioned that he thought one particular description was especially accurate, and Tuchman replied “Glad you thought so...I was quoting you” (p. 17).

Tuchman points out that ethnographies have often (unintentionally) tempted readers to try to identify the locale, and even the identity of the people described, telling the story of Arthur Vidich, a renowned sociologist who was commissioned to do a community study of Ithaca, the university town in which Cornell University is located. Even though he had given his participants pseudonyms, the townspeople were able to identify who had said what, and it caused enormous tension. Many of the power brokers in the town and in the university were outraged, believing they had been misrepresented, and ended up creating a float in their town’s Fourth of July parade, with a full-scale replica of the cover of the book, and those power brokers following the float, defiantly wearing signs with their pseudonyms on them. For many years, he was banned from entering the town and became a pariah with many of his colleagues.

I give these two examples only to say that ethnographically studying universities and academics presents some unique challenges, and that I have attempted to mitigate those challenges by doing my what I can to obscure the identities of the university and my participants. I have followed Tuchman’s lead on this, changing demographic characteristics wherever doing so does not compromise the meaning of the data. To readers who may feel uncomfortable with this lack of specificity, I can only beg your understanding.

Conclusion

While there has been substantial attention paid to the effects of neoliberalisation on the working lives of academics living in the West/Global North, there has been minimal exploration of the fine-grained experiences, and effects, of academics working at international

branch campuses (IBC). IBCs are extreme cases of the global, neoliberal higher education sector. Similarly to the foreign subsidiaries of multinational corporations, they are also an example of the neocolonial spread of Western knowledge and practices, particularly into countries in the Global South such as China, Malaysia and Vietnam. Previous literature has shown that these campuses are characterised by poor retention of foreign staff as well as low morale. This thesis draws attention to the systemic issues and problems in the global higher education sector by taking a bottom-up approach, exploring the lived experiences of academics at one of these “extreme case” IBCs. It is my hope that in doing so, I will clearly lay out the effects of these higher-order structural concerns, and unpack the potential effects of focusing on the production of marketable authenticity in an international higher education context. Without this knowledge, localised attempts to improve academic working life will only ever be partial and ineffective, while our understandings of the effects of the forces of neoliberalism and globalisation on higher education will continue to lack necessary context.

Chapter 1: IVU-Land and Surrounds

Introduction

When I arrived at IVU in 2016, it was to explore a particular phenomenon that I had observed myself when I worked as a lecturer in Vietnam between 2009 and 2013: invisible work. Sociologist Arlene Kaplan Daniels first explored invisible work in her 1987 paper of that name, which argued that our understanding of work as "the things you have to do to get paid" was overly limiting and didn't account for the "social construction of daily life," or the "development of institutions," (p. 403). Anthropologist Lucy Suchman (1995) took up the notion in her paper "Making Work Visible", examining how work-process designers often don't take into account the human logics, rationalisations and workarounds that occur within every organisation when they are designing workflows and productivity-enhancing software. In this, she provides a nuanced analysis of the pros and cons of bringing to light the types of work that may be visible only to the employee doing it, making it more visible to decision-makers, particularly for creating streamlined workflows. Then Susan Leigh Star and Anselm Strauss (1999) expanded the idea even further, to describe various types of labour that are expected of some members of a workplace but not others and that is not accounted for formally in job contracts. My working definition of invisible work then became, "the work that must be done in order to be able to successfully do the things that your job description and performance plan indicate are your substantive job". However, despite my intentions, this concept did not end up being the core element of my thesis, for reasons I shall explain in this chapter.

Vietnam is a Communist country with a market economy that prides itself on its traditional Asian values but is intent on modernisation and progress. Furthermore, according to both my Vietnamese and foreign participants at IVU, the Vietnamese language did not have an equivalent word for the English word "privacy" before opening up to globalisation and the internet in the late 1990s, because it simply wasn't needed. Each of these elements of Vietnamese culture was brought up with me by participants at IVU on a varying regular basis. Therefore, my goal on fieldwork at IVU was to explore what kinds of invisible work foreign academics working at an international branch campus, particularly in a developing

country with this unique set of cultural traits⁸, needed to do. What additional work was required of them if they were to maintain their identities as competent professionals, while also contending with a new cultural context and workplace environment? Invisible work can be intellectual, emotional and sometimes physical (Kaplan Daniels, 1987). Therefore, I expected to see multiple types of invisible work. I assumed I would see emotional work (such as interpreting cultural norms or having an empathetic awareness of the needs of others with differing cultural frameworks (McDowell, Hilfinger Messias, & Dawson Estrada, 2011)). I assumed I would see intellectual work of course, as this is an academic's bread and butter. And I expected to see physical invisible work (such as managing visa requirements or even maintaining relationships with family members in the home country). All, I assumed, would be crucial to a foreign academics' ability to navigate and thrive in their new cultural environment and I wanted to understand how they did this. I wondered how much impact this additional work may be having on these individuals' available cognitive and emotional resources (Lauring & Selmer, 2015). On the other hand, following Suchman's (1995) arguments that sometimes it is in an employee's best interest to keep their invisible work to themselves, I also wondered in what ways foreign academics may be using their invisible work to their advantage.

After nine months on site, I had indeed gathered an enormous amount of data about the invisible work foreign academics were doing. I had explored how this work differed from the kinds of invisible work that these academics felt they had done in their home countries, how it varied from the invisible work of the Vietnamese scholars, and how it deviated from the invisible work of the non-academic staff of the campus. I had also gathered a lot of data about the visible work that everyone was doing, and it was in this data that I kept hitting on an uncomfortable point of interest — the *most* visible work that everyone was doing, including the academics, was marketing the campus. Marketing-related tasks were built into academic job descriptions and work plans. Marketing was always the first agenda item on any Town Hall meeting — in fact, it was always *somewhere* on any meeting agenda. Academics talked about the marketing of the university frequently, both regarding how wrong it was that they should be so focused on marketing tasks *and* regarding how they could better market themselves, their work and the university at large. For the academics, however, the job of marketing the university came with additional invisible work, managing the changes to their

⁸ I can't find any evidence in the literature to confirm this point about the word privacy. However, it was a common trope at IVU that had explanatory power for both Vietnamese and foreigners in explaining cultural differences, so I have included it here all the same.

professional and personal identities. Because not only were they being asked to market the university explicitly, but they each came to realise, to differing degrees, that they weren't just the marketers — they were the marketing materials. As I began to recognise this, the focus of my thesis changed. I couldn't look only at the invisible work anymore. I needed to also look at how IVU was reshaping their academic workforce into a visual display of academic authenticity, and what effects that was having on academic subjectivities on the campus.

To demonstrate how I did that, allow me to provide some background on my methods.

Studying up, with, between and through

My goal as an organisational anthropologist is not so much to explore the formal "organisation" to which I've gained access, but more, to examine all the various ways that the people and things that share this common employer are constantly organising themselves and each other. Unlike other types of management theorists who may focus more on individuals, organisational anthropologists consider the relationality of the various participants (and, as I mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, I consider both humans and non-humans with any power to affect change within the organisation to be potential participants). As Garsten and Nyqvist (2013) point out, management theories like Taylorism⁹ often fail to consider social norms and how they affect individual behaviours. Thus, a focus on processes, relationships, and how these two ideas interplay to produce "realities", allowed me to gaze into the spaces between people and things and seek the meaning they were working *together* to produce.

As is often the case in organisational anthropology, I was in the rather odd position of "studying" people who were much like myself. Most were researchers, many around my age (35 at time of fieldwork) or older, highly educated, and living for an indeterminate period in another country, as I was for my fieldwork, and as I had done as an employee in other universities in Vietnam for many years prior. I did not think of myself as an insider at IVU though, nor did my participants treat me like "one of them", at least at first. Like Thomson and Gunter (2011), I do not find the binary of insider versus outsider researcher very useful or persuasive – at various times I was one, the other or both, with the advantages and disadvantages that accompany each. The environment, however, did feel familiar to me as I

⁹ Taylorism, sometimes known as Scientific Management, is a theory of work behaviour developed by Frederick William Taylor (1856-1915) to eradicate inefficiency, particularly in factory and repetitive work, linked to incentives for increased productivity. It is often used as a pejorative term in universities to describe the impact of neoliberal ideologies on academia. For an in-depth overview, see Banta 1993.

had worked in several universities in Vietnam before and had always found the combination of Western academic ideals with Vietnamese values to be complex and intriguing. Garsten and Nyqvist (2013) posit that "doing anthropology in complex settings, therefore, requires a different set of skills" (loc. 208), and I found this to be true of my research compared to the content taught in the traditional methods courses I had taken before fieldwork. As my participants intricately understood what I was trying to achieve at all times, this sometimes made them either overly helpful (opening the potential for social desirability bias) or overly wary (making it more difficult for me to gather data). To mitigate these risks, I employed a para-ethnographic approach. The notion of para-ethnography entails involving the participant as a quasi-member of the "research team" (which consists of you and your participants) and is used most frequently in contexts where the key informants are also researchers or other kinds of knowledge workers (Holmes & Marcus, 2008). I made my research questions, theoretical framework and evolving analyses clear to my participants as often as possible, and they, in turn, offered a running commentary, not only on their thoughts, actions and motivations but also at a meta-cognitive level, regarding their thoughts about their thoughts, actions and motivations during data collection. As researchers, they also often provided interesting suggestions for literature to explore to unpack what we were seeing, which I sometimes mention throughout this thesis to demonstrate how my participants were self-theorising about their own lives.

Observing and shadowing humans and non-humans

I undertook various types of observation in this thesis. The most expected was, of course, participant observation, in which I remained stationary to observe the comings and goings at the critical sites at IVU in which the place, people, issues and events occurring are producing social or cultural meaning and actions. For me, this often involved sitting at one of the large communal tables in the staff cafe and chatting to anyone who sat down, or hanging out around photocopiers, in staff common areas, or on the staff bus. However, I also used other methods. As Hugh Gusterson (1997) demonstrates, it is useful to undertake "polymorphous engagements" (p. 116) in researching organisations, because often participant observation alone will not be enough to answer the research questions in a complex organisational environment. Therefore, in addition to observations, I also did 45 interviews with academics and non-academics from many nationalities and all levels of the university's hierarchy; undertook thematic analyses of hundreds of university documents; and "shadowed" 12 specific academics for several hours, several days or even several weeks at a time.

Used with increasing frequency in the discipline of organisational ethnography, shadowing¹⁰ involves intensively following a single actor in an organization for an extended length of time (McDonald, 2005) in order to understand one *type* of actor's experience of interacting with their environment, rather than trying to understand the whole environment, as is the case with typical participant observation. In Goffman's (1956) terms, the shadowee is allowing the researcher backstage access. Because of the intensive and protracted time spent with a specific actor, the data that is gathered about those backstage processes is likely to be very rich, dense and detailed, and in the case of shadowing humans at least, will reflect not only the participant's behaviours OR their opinions but both. It is possible to observe this duality because, in addition to observation of the quotidian nature of the actor's activities, the researcher elicits a running commentary from the participant, intended to both clarify the researcher's observations, and also evoke the participant's thoughts, feelings and justifications for their actions (McDonald, 2005). Shadowing of humans can be a particularly useful technique in organisational research, not only because of the mobile nature of many employees (Czarniawska, 2004) but also because invisible practices may be going unnoticed even by the participants themselves (Czarniawska, 2007) and thus they would be unlikely to mention them in an interview setting.

I also shadowed ideas and objects at various points. For example, quite early in my fieldwork, I started realising that there was a gendered dynamic at IVU that I had not anticipated. Therefore, I began a "follow the thing" protocol (Marcus, 1995), in which I noted anything that I interpreted as being of a gendered nature, then followed up with the people, documents or artefacts involved. The results of this exploration can be found in Chapter 4. On another occasion, I spent several days shadowing an iPhone to see what role it was playing in a particular academic's network. In this way, I was attentive to more of the ways that invisible work was being performed, which during my write up has also allowed me to untangle the many ways that marketable authenticity is produced at IVU.

To step you through how I came to my arguments about marketable academic authenticity, this chapter therefore welcomes you into the world of IVU, introduces you to some of the people, objects and ideas that populate the place, and provides you with context

¹⁰ Anette Nyqvist (2008, p. 29) calls shadowing, "tag-along fieldwork", to avoid giving the impression that the observation is happening surreptitiously or without the shadowee's knowledge or permission. My shadowees absolutely did give written consent for me to shadow them.

from the literature to better understand the broader forces that may be informing these micro-moments on campus. I'm going to take you on a tour through a typical day in the life of my fieldwork. As any good tour guide would, I will point out interesting features of IVU along the way, and give you some of the historical and theoretical background information that will help you unpack what we see.

We'll begin at my apartment, a short taxi ride from IVU, and arrive at IVU early to take advantage of the cool morning quiet. As students and staff begin arriving, we'll grab a coffee with friends before we meet my shadowee for the day. We'll go up to their staffroom to do some prep for the day's classes, then head off to the classroom for a few hours before making our way to the staff cafe for lunch. After lunch we'll have some administration to do, before taking advantage of the daily 3 pm sugar-low to reflect as we caffeinate. We'll then catch the 5.20pm bus home with the day's shadowee.

In walking you through a typical day for me, as a fieldworker at IVU, I hope to first give you a background understanding of International Branch Campuses as sites where the forces of neoliberalisation and globalisation intersect. I'll provide an overview of the literature on academic mobility, and some of the experiences of foreign academics at IVU such as their management of work/life balance issues, as well as their concerns around being "managed" and loss of academic freedom. I will follow this up by discussing the impact of these concerns on academic identity, for both the university and for individual academics. Finally, I will introduce the higher education landscape in Vietnam and discuss how it may be impacting the experiences of academics at IVU.

Living bubble to bubble: Journey from Vietnam to IVU-Land

Looking out from the balcony of my 21st-floor apartment, if you craned your neck a little to the right, you could see the light reflect off IVU's futuristic chrome and tiled buildings far off in the distance. From this angle, and if you didn't look too hard, Ho Chi Minh City was a glistening vista of rice fields and shrimp ponds, with a sleek new housing estate intersecting the farmlands. Like the balconies of many of my participants who lived in the same apartment complex, my balcony faced one of the few under-developed areas of the city. Coming home to clean white walls and views of fields was a blessing to me — one that I had to consciously remind myself to think of, throughout my fieldwork, as "privilege in action".

It was easier to remember my privileged position, however, if I looked directly down rather than to the horizon. At the foot of my block, just beyond the property's border, a noxious tributary wound its blackened waters between a community of lean-tos, perched precariously on the muddy banks. Even from 21 storeys up, you could watch the garbage and other flotsam floating sluggishly through the sludge as the residents went about their day, preparing food, fixing motorbikes, yelling out to each other from home to home. If the wind blew in the wrong direction, the smell of the "shit creek", as my Vietnamese friends sometimes called these tributaries in English, would waft up even to my apartment's lofty heights, occasioning the sounds of my neighbours slamming their balcony doors shut and their air conditioners shuddering to life. The people in the lean-tos assumedly endured this stench without relief. The contrast between the lives of those people living below, and the bubble of privilege in which I resided, hit me in the guts every time I looked down. "So just don't look down," one of my participants, who also lived in the building, advised me. It was sound advice for maintaining my mental health, but I still feel uncomfortable admitting that I often followed it.

In her ethnography of expatriates in Jakarta, anthropologist Anne-Meike Fechter (2007) often speaks of the dissonance and discomfort her participants experienced, living in such privilege when the contrast with those around them was so stark. She argues against popular notions of "global flows" (p. vii), demonstrating that many "global citizens'" lives are actually characterised by the boundaries they put up between themselves and their host countries, and often also between themselves and the host nationals with which they coexist:

[A] key aspect of [being an expatriate] was living in an 'expatriate bubble', and while writing up my ethnographic material I realised that what had struck me was the pervasive importance of boundaries. Wherever expatriates were, whatever they did, boundaries seemed the key to understanding their lives. These were boundaries between the orderly insides of their houses and the chaotic streets, between Western food served at home and street vendors' fare outside, and between the cocooned Western expatriate and a sprawling third-world city which surrounded them. (Fechter, 2007: vi)

So, to pass through our first boundary of the day. To exit my complex at the ground level, you would step out into a side street that connected the 4-lane highway running along one

side of the block, and a busy market street on the other. Life inside the “security gate”¹¹ was cleaner; glossier somehow. In the liminal space just outside the gate, where residents waited for taxis, *xe ôm*¹² or their private drivers to pick them up, it was still easy to distinguish the people who lived and worked inside the complex. There were the Vietnamese men and women in shiny shoes and suits, the Western “teacher” types, clothed in requisite conservatism, the Vietnamese nannies taking expensively adorned cherubs out for morning excursions. Vietnam passed by, in front of their noses. Staring at their smartphones, they rarely appeared to notice.

I usually caught a taxi to work, as I can't ride a motorbike. Even in the early morning haze, Ho Chi Minh City's outer suburbs shimmer with heat. At that time of day — around 7.15am — the memory of the relative cool of dawn still lingered, but the prickles of sweat that threatened to drip down into my carefully applied lipstick would be a clear indicator of the temperatures to come. It's impossible to keep makeup intact in that place — the moment you exit your air-conditioned apartment, the violent heat, the swirling dust, and the alluring temptation presented by street vendors hawking aromatic coffee and *Bánh mì ốp-là* — the world's most delicious version of egg on toast – all wreak havoc on your morning ablutions. For most foreign women living in this area of Ho Chi Minh City, arrival at work means an immediate dash to the bathrooms to restore order to the chaos. It's not so critical for the Vietnamese women — many of them don't wear makeup, and even those that do seem to have a knack for looking cool and collected that foreigners here rarely master. As sociologist Pauline Leonard (2010) points out in her ethnography of white expatriates in Hong Kong, “differences in culture often exacerbate the tendency to maintain an ‘expatriate bubble’, in which the (often neo-colonial) lifestyles and cultural values of the home country are maintained,” (p. 65).

Richardson and McKenna (2002) in some of the earliest work published on expatriate academics, divided the experiences of being a foreign academic into four categories:

- Explorers: those who experienced expatriation as an adventure
- Students: those who saw expatriation as a learning experience that catalysed personal and professional transformation
- Outsiders: those who felt themselves to be isolated from the host culture; and

¹¹ I put this in inverted commas because this gate is not actually secure at all; anybody could wander in and out as they pleased without being questioned.

¹² The Vietnamese word for a motorbike taxi. Literally translates as “vehicle hug”.

- Tightrope walkers: those who felt the precariousness of their work situation and were conscious of the risks of expatriation as an academic

I would argue that most academics living outside their home countries experience the majority of these attitudes at different points in their time abroad — this indeed appeared to be the case for my participants. Further, as the literature suggests, the approach that my participants had to the experience of expatriating seemed to have a significant impact on how well they adjusted at work. The literature supports this supposition. Froese (2012) for example, found that an interest in the host country or related region was often linked to increased job adjustment, while refugee-like motivations (Richardson & McKenna, 2002) — meaning that the academic felt they had been forced out of their home country, usually by an unforgiving labour market — were found to reduce the likelihood of adjustment (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). In another study (Lauring & Selmer, 2015) the mental resilience of the academic was found to have potential impact on their job adjustment. The possible effect of stress on job adjustment was evident, time and time again, for my participants. They regularly talked to me about the changes they had observed in themselves since their arrival in Vietnam: increases in memory loss and disorganisation; higher levels of fatigue; extreme and sometimes uncontrollable emotions about the different cultural environment; extreme introversion or extraversion behaviours; loss of focus; and poor judgement being a few of the experiences they described. I would argue, therefore, that Lauring and Selmer's (2015) study does not take into account the fact that mental resilience is an individual trait. However, in a neoliberal university environment like IVU, the impacts of structural concerns, and the relational aspects of stress *between* people rather than just within them (as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6), both have significant and lasting effects on both the way that stress manifests, grows or dissipates, and the consequences for job adjustment.

Another world: Entering IVU-Land

Because of the desire to "freshen up" before anyone sees you, there are advantages to arriving at IVU early, before the crush of students changes the silent, monolithic buildings into towering nests of teeming activity. Most mornings, I achieved this early start, although the highway that took me to my field site already shuddered with hyperactivity as trucks and motorbikes moved people in and out of the city; an unmuffled, unrestrained, unashamed sea of sound. Walking through the gates of the campus and into "IVU-Land", as some of my participants referred to it, I never ceased to revel in the relative peace that would descend. It

really was like walking into a different world — as one academic claimed, working at IVU was more like "*living* in IVU-land and *visiting* Vietnam on weekends" (their emphasis).

Entering the main academic building, you could literally taste the air change from the humid tropics to the carefully controlled climate of the quintessential office monolith. IVU prides itself on emphasising the practical, rather than the philosophical, and this is evident in every design choice; there is no hint of leather chair or ivory tower here. The focus is firmly on graduate outcomes and employability. In fact, although the bachelor degrees at IVU are six-semester/three-year degrees, the trimester system at IVU allows most students to complete their six semesters over two years. This is promoted as one of the advantages of an IVU degree – get yourself into the workforce faster, and start making money before your peers from Vietnamese universities! Similarly, research at IVU, according to the university's website, should always be applied research, and should have some payoff for Vietnam — IVU is, after all, a guest to this country.

The global, neoliberal, corporate university

As discussed in the introduction, the exploration of the neoliberal university is growing into a substantial body of research. But what does it mean to consider neoliberal universities as also being *global*? Not every economy in the world subscribes to neoliberal ideologies, and those that do, while using a consistent label, enact those neoliberal practices in incredibly diverse ways. Neoliberalism is therefore not a monolithic concept — at both global and local scales, it is as diverse and multiple as the other ideas discussed in this thesis. Like the mythical shapeshifter, it changes not only its outward appearance, but the very make up of its being in order to mean what people and policies need it to mean in different contexts.

Thus, to speak of a global, neoliberal university risks laying a smothering blanket over the top of many different ideas that are expressed variably in the literature. For example, Hirtt (2012, in Hill & Kumar, 2012) argues that philosophers and politicians once advanced educational theory at a global level; now, it is global think tanks or international monitoring organisations like the OECD, the World Trade Organisation and the World Economic Forum who have seized control of educational messaging and philosophy, with a firm eye on economic gain. Hirtt (2012, p. 214) claims that the educational institution, "has been transformed: it is no longer an instrument of state ideology, but a machine serving global and international economic competition." Further, he argues, the objective of education is no

longer to acquire knowledge, which has both a short shelf-life in an era of constant change and is often geographically specific. Instead, education's new mission is to train students with skills, which can be better transferred and translated not only across industries and from technology to technology, but also across national borders to enhance profitability for companies on a more global scale.

Anthropologist of Higher Education Wesley Shumar points out that globalisation has an inherent neoliberal economic ideology, "with its emphasis on a culture of consumption" (Shumar, 2004, p. 30). He posits that this is profoundly important for the globalisation of higher education as it ties universities into this culture of consumption (where "education" is the product to be consumed), quite separately from the neoliberal ideologies that may inform the nation states within which they are geographically located. It would appear that universities are between a rock and a hard place — even if they escaped state-controlled audit culture, they would hit global consumption trends, which would likely lead them back to efficiency and accountability and value for money, albeit via a slightly different route.

This is evident in the myriad ways that internationalisation plays out on neoliberal universities. One need only look at the criteria by which universities are globally ranked — their ability to claim international relevance is a crucial indicator of their degree of "excellence" (Altbach, 2013). Thus, being a global neoliberal university is not only about being steeped in audit culture, as described by Shore and Wright (2000, in Strathern, 2000) in their depiction of the neoliberalisation of universities in Britain (and her colonies) — it is also about global competitiveness as both an indicator and a driver of increased profitability.

Coffee and "Western" culture on campus

As students and staff would begin to stream onto the campus, I would often sit with my shadowees or friends in the large, open-air cafeteria to drink coffee and observe the morning's activities. Staff and students alike, one friend told me, have their coffee cults at IVU and few deviate from their regular cafes, in the morning at least. "The coffee you carry as you move through the campus to your first class of the day tells people a lot about you," she speculated. "What program you're in, your household income, whether you are proud of how much money you have, proud to be at an international university, or prefer not to flaunt it." She pointed to Trung Nguyen¹³ Coffee, a trendy Vietnamese coffee chain that offered a range of European-style coffees, and the unnamed local Vietnamese coffee counter beside it, as two

¹³ Trung Nguyen is pronounced (approximately) as "Troom Win"

juxtaposing examples. At Trung Nguyen was where the big-shot action happened – the university president, Elizabeth Goffman and her executive team were often seen quaffing their relatively expensive \$2USD cappuccinos in the shade of Trung Nguyen Coffee's blue umbrellas, discussing, it appeared, the important business of running the university in the early morning heat. Any student who lined up for a high-end, Western-style Highlands coffee in a branded paper cup, rather than going one counter over in the cafeteria to buy Vietnamese-style iced coffee in a tall glass for less than a dollar, was making a clear statement about their allegiance to the Western ideals of their International University.

A certain faction of hardcore English-teaching staff refused even to drink the coffee on campus, as they felt there was no “authentic” Vietnamese option — they were more inclined to walk out to the road where they could get a Vietnamese *cà phê sữa đá* for less than a US dollar. As they re-entered the grounds with their plastic bags full of ice surrounding a cardboard container filled with caffeinated authenticity, other staff would glance scornfully at them. I once overheard an academic in line at Trung Nguyen Coffee saying that these English teachers had “gone native”, and the disdain on his face indicated that this was no compliment.

The Vietnamese students who make up 95% of the student population at IVU often complain about the cost of the various Vietnamese coffee options on campus — even the wealthiest students often object to paying 40.000 Vietnam Dong (\$2USD) for a coffee that would cost only 10.000 (50c) on the street. As they swarm into campus on their scooters, it's not uncommon to see a little plastic bag swinging from their handlebars — why buy onsite when you can pick up a takeaway on your way to uni? For many of the foreign staff, however, or so my friend mused, the ready access to “real lattes”, much like their local barista would have made back home, is symbolic of the advantages to working on an international branch campus rather than a Vietnamese university.

Anthropologist of food Brad Weiss (2011), examining how notions of “local foods” can be entangled with notions of “taste and place” (p. 440), talks about how “taste can become one of place's constituent qualities” (p. 441). He argues that people construct places in collaboration with a variety of non-humans (he is speaking particularly of pigs and the local food movement) in *sensorial* ways. To bring this into the context of IVU's coffee culture, we can imagine that each of the different groups listed above is constructing a different “International-Vietnamese experience” for themselves via the sensation of drinking their

coffee. The Vietnamese students drinking sweet, viscous local coffee from a tall, cold, sweating glass filled with ice as they haul books by Americans and Europeans off to their classes taught by Brits and Australians are experiencing one IVU. The Westerners sipping their hot lattes from paper cups as they fan themselves beneath blue umbrellas are experiencing another. And the Westerners drinking cheap street coffee through a straw, as the plastic bag in which their drink is held crunches and crackles in their hand, are deliberately constructing a different IVU experience for themselves. Each is seeking an authentic international experience of IVU, but using different ingredients to assemble it.

Internationalisation, Transnational Education and International Branch Campuses

“Internationalisation” is the flavour of the proverbial month in the world of higher education. All over the globe, universities are scrambling to give their strategic plans an international focus, citing tertiary experiences that are more inclusive, more multicultural, more globalised, more culturally sensitive, and provide more opportunities for students to engage with an international community (Delgado-Márquez, Escudero-Torres, & Hurtado-Torres, 2013).

Internationalisation is not, however, a new term, having emerged as a buzzword in the education sector in the early 1980s to refer to a set of activities undertaken at a program or institution level; however this has evolved significantly over the ensuing 30 years to incorporate notions of national policy-making (Caruana & Hanstock, 2003; De Wit, 2011; Knight, 2004; Stella & Liston, 2008). One of the more commonly used definitions in today's context is Knight's (2004), which describes internationalisation as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2004, p. 8). In this definition, “international” refers to the *relationship* between nations; for example, many universities have formed relationships with other countries through transnational education.

Transnational education, as a form of internationalisation, has been defined by the Global Alliance for Transnational Education 1997 as “any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country (the host country) to that in which the institution is based (the home country),” (in Harvey, 2011). This can include distance education or online learning, twinning programmes, branch campuses and franchises (Harvey, 2011).

International Branch Campuses, to be discussed in the ensuing section, fall underneath this umbrella.

The concept of “intercultural” education (Knight, 2004) focuses on the idea of internationalisation within, or on campus. It acknowledges that nations and cultures have many *differences* that can be celebrated and explored through education. This again encompasses the idea of embracing international students and staff, with all that they can bring and contribute, within the classroom and in extra-curricular experiences. However, in many countries, there is significant cultural diversity in the average classroom even before taking international students into account. The intercultural dimension also includes internationalisation of the curriculum, including the adaptation of pedagogical approaches to incorporate intercultural expectations. This may incorporate scaffolding tasks with greater structure, assisting students with writing skills, or even just informing students of a teachers' expectations of how a classroom should look and sound, rather than assuming that every student in a classroom knows this inherently (Li, 2008).

The third dimension of Knight's (2004) working definition, “global”, is included to give a sense of having a worldwide scope, and focuses on *similarities* across nations, rather than differences. Globalisation in education is about exploring the issues — both at a policy level and within the curriculum — that have universal application; considering trends and developments that are affecting all regions of the world, albeit in a variety of ways; and investigating how regions, nations, cultures, economies and systems inter-connect (Tye, 2003). Scholars have described globalisation as a catalyst for internationalisation (Caruana, 2008; De Wit, 2011) — in today's knowledge economy, brought about by the emergence of a global village, universities must equip students for more than just operating within a single “local” context. Internationalisation can be seen as a response to this.

The Periphery with the Power: International Branch Campuses

...an ‘international branch campus’ is an entity pertaining to a university whose primary location is in one country, which operates in another and offers its own degree in that country. Upon successful completion of the course program, fully undertaken at the unit abroad, students are awarded a degree from the foreign institution. (Altbach, 2011, p. 8)

International branch campuses — characterised by the wholesale mobility of an institution or university campus to another location in a different country — are not a new

phenomenon, although they are an increasing one. During the colonial era, many European universities set up branch campuses in their African and Asian colonies (Altbach, 2004). This has consolidated an existing centre-periphery dichotomy of higher education — the metropole existing as the centre of the world's knowledge production, and the margins, ironically consisting of the majority of the world's population, following the metropole's lead (Altbach, 2004; Connell, 2014; Garsten, 1994). Today's IBCs cannot escape this colonial legacy, and although many of those original branch campuses have now closed, the 260+ IBCs that have sprung up in the last 30 years perpetuate this centre-periphery imaginary.

International branch campuses are characterised by attempts to duplicate a version of the home institution at the institutions located in these more “marginal” nations. This should at least include replicating “the student experience” in and out of the classroom but may also include reproducing systems and procedures that have been designed or have emerged to the specifications of the home university. It is difficult to achieve exact replication, however, as Altbach (2011) points out, as it is improbable that the quality of the faculty, of the students, or of the facilities will be precisely the same at each. To put this another way, it is impossible to build an exact replica of an assemblage when you have a different combination of actants to assemble.

Another key characteristic of IBCs is that they are often set up to be revenue-producing for their home institution. This means that they are usually full-fee-paying for students of that campus, even if the home institution has a subsidy scheme or the state within which the home university is located provides free or subsidised education to its citizens. This amplifies the existing paradigm of neoliberalism in universities, setting the students up as customers who are often paying a premium for a higher quality product — an international, rather than local, education. Indeed, Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2012), researchers located at a branch campus in Dubai, begin their paper about student perceptions of the quality of branch campuses with the following statement: “It is widely accepted that in any service industry it is the customer who defines service quality, so it is logical for researchers and practitioners to research the customer perspective,” (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2012, p. 61).

Thus, an intriguing paradox unfolds. Although an IBC is located on the periphery, affording it a lower and more marginal status than its home institution in the metropole, the students at an IBC arguably wield more power over the institution and the staff who work there than do their counterparts at the home campus. When universities use a “customer is king” approach

to higher education management, as is the case at IVU, the key decision-makers on the campus must by necessity be those who seek to grant those customers' (students') expressed desires. While academics seek to educate and discipline students, these are only a small portion of what students expressly desire (and sometimes, they manifestly do NOT desire these things from their university — the desire for a qualification does not necessarily equate to the desire for an education). Therefore, it stands to reason that the opinions and decisions of professional staff — the marketers, student recruiters, student services managers etc. — would have priority over the academics' opinions in many, though not all, cases.

Wayfinding and finding your way at a neocolonial university.

By 8:40 am, the IVU staff bus would have arrived and many of the academics would be on campus, ready to start their day. I would often meet my shadowees in the foyer of the newest academic building, in which my own desk was located. As I waited, I would gaze around the main reception area, blinding with silver and white and overlooked by a shiny acrylic feature wall in lime green. Funky, oddly-shaped armchairs in a kind of oversized Eames-style punctuated the coldly cavernous space with shades of storm grey, black and bright, fire-engine red. These chairs were usually occupied, often by lost-looking, middle-aged Vietnamese people; the parents of prospective students, come to IVU to meet with a student recruitment officer about enrolling their child. As the foreign academics would move through the space on their way to their staffroom, I would watch the parents' widened eyes following them, their faces unreadable to me, but their focus unquestionable.

Standing sentinel at the entry to this space was a chrome sign with instructions in English, politely instructing you to take a seat as "someone will be with you shortly". This sign always puzzled me — although English is the language of instruction at IVU, as it is on IVU's home campus, a reception area is a space that is by necessity shared and negotiated with the wider Vietnamese public, and thus where the signage should logically be bilingual. One of the marketing staff told me that she had had a "run-in" with a member of the executive a few years ago when she had suggested that it would make visiting parents feel more welcome if IVU's wayfinding collateral — marketing jargon for signs that provide directions — was in both English *and* Vietnamese. The many debates that followed this suggestion prompted the executive in question to launch a university-wide project ensuring that Vietnamese was not used *anywhere* on campus, because (my marketing informant pounded the table fiercely as

she described this): "This is an English-speaking campus, not a Vietnamese-speaking campus! If they want to speak Vietnamese, they should go to a Vietnamese university! There's no room for that here, and if the signs are in Vietnamese it will only encourage them!"¹⁴

IBCs have a colonial history, and this history is neither neutral nor escapable. Edward Said, writing about his own experience of being educated in British colonial institutions within Egypt and Palestine in his 1991 T.B Davie Memorial Lecture titled, "Identity, authority and freedom: the potentate and the traveller", describes the consequences he has observed and experienced as a result of his formative education:

It is important to understand, therefore, the passion that went into reclaiming educational territory that for so long had been dominated by foreign rulers in the Arab world, and it is equally important to understand the tremendous spiritual wound felt by many of us because of the sustained presence in our midst of domineering foreigners who taught us to respect distant norms and values more than our own (Said, 1991, p. 219)

It was also Said (1978/2003), of course, who put forth the notion of Orientalism — the ways that "The West" views "The East" as an inferior, exotic "Other" to their own dominance. This feeds into theories of postcolonialism, which in a higher education context could be reframed as theories that trouble and problematise notions that colonialism is behind us, and that explore the enduring legacy of the colonial project and its effects (Jazeel, 2012).

Into the staffroom: the days and definitions of foreign academics

After meeting my shadowee for the day, we would usually make our way up the grand, blood-red central staircase in the middle of the building, to find their staffroom. The staffrooms at IVU are open plan, with up to 40 front-line academics sharing each space, each with a grey carpeted barrier cornering off the fronts of their desks to prevent eye contact between staff members. These barriers did not prevent one from looking up to the industrial-style exposed ceilings, however. The shining silver air-conditioning ducts that chequered the ceiling appeared, as one of my participants described it, like something from a child's Halloween space suit. Much to his amusement, each tube had the word or acronym "SAD"

¹⁴ This is even more interesting in light of the January 2019 news article about the Director of Studies who was asked to step down after advising students at Duke University to stop speaking Chinese on campus: <https://www.heraldsun.com/news/local/article225152560.html>

printed on it, with an arrow that seemed to (inadvertently, no doubt) point towards the manager's office. No one at IVU could tell me why it was there or what it might mean.



Figure 2: Worm's eye view of the ceiling of an IVU staffroom.

Some staffrooms were more crowded than others, with academics crammed so tightly into the space that they bumped the backs of each other's chairs whenever they tried to leave their desks. Others, in understaffed departments, had so much space that the affect was ominous; they described the room as "echoey" and "eerie" and felt uncomfortable being there alone.

IVU's recruitment strategy aims to have approximately 80% foreign (or expatriate) academics on staff at all times. An expatriate academic is a member of the higher education sector who has moved their dominant place of residence across national borders to take up legal, long-term, yet time-bound, employment in a teaching or research-related role within a university environment (Trembath, 2016). This definition is based first on the typology of expatriates and migrants put forward by Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann (2014). This typology delineates the concept of expatriation as being specific to the intention of relocating internationally to be engaged in legal employment within the new country, while migration is more broadly associated with relocating across geographical borders for any

reason. This definition of expatriate also discards those who, although conducting legitimate work abroad for a period, have not permanently transferred their dominant place of residence. In the case of academics, this, therefore, excludes those who travel for conferences, academic sabbaticals or fieldwork, during which the centre of the academic's life remains in their home country. I will continue to use the terms expatriate and foreign academics interchangeably throughout this thesis¹⁵.

At the time of beginning my fieldwork, there were 178 academics from 29 different countries, with the top 5 being from the UK (20%), Vietnam (18%), the US (16%), Australia (11%) and Canada (7%). With 82% foreign academics and 18% Vietnamese academics, this was quite close to IVU's goal of an 80:20 ratio in the academic cohort. Within the foreign academic cohort, the largest age group was 30 to 40-year-olds at 42%, with 40 to 50-year-olds coming in second at 33%. Just over 20% of the foreign academics held doctoral degrees, and the ratio of male to female foreign academics was almost 4:1. See Appendix A for an overview of these demographics.

However, by the time I left the field, all of these statistics had changed because of IVU's high levels of turnover. To illustrate: 92 foreign academics had left the HCMC campus between March 2015 and March 2016 — that's close to half (44%) of the academics of the university, and more than half of the expatriate academics (52%). Only 63 academics had been hired to replace those who had left, meaning the affected departments were significantly understaffed, with many lecturers teaching above the average teaching load.

As Shore (2008) has indicated, as a result of audit culture and the standard practices of new managerialism, increased and higher-intensity workloads are not uncommon across the higher education sector in many countries, especially in the West. However, when you add the experience of expatriating to these intense workloads, I argue that the consequences can become even more extreme for the academics living through these intense workloads.

¹⁵ I developed the above definition for a paper I wrote in 2016, pointing out that much of the field of expatriate academic management research did not specify what was actually meant when referring to expatriate academics, and often didn't delineate between the three types of mobility mentioned above. In this thesis, however, I shall in fact use the term expatriate academic and foreign academic interchangeably, because although the term 'foreign academic' refers to a broader phenomenon that includes permanent academic migrants, non-Vietnamese people cannot become citizens of Vietnam, and are very rarely granted permanent residence that is not linked to a sponsoring employer. Therefore, by default, my interlocutors fit the definition of expatriate academics whether they would have liked to migrate to Vietnam permanently or not.

Be prepared: Issues of autonomy and control

Once settled into the staffroom, preparation would usually begin for the day's classes. Consider this excerpt from my field notes, in which Molly, an older British academic, discussed her preparation for classes.

Molly is looking at student administration software (SAS) on her computer. It's before 8 am, so it's still quiet — there is only one other academic here. She says to me, beginning in a hushed tone and gradually increasing in volume: "I'm the course coordinator for my course, but you know that doesn't automatically give me the rights on SAS [the software] to actually coordinate the course or my students. I have to apply. But no-one told me this; I found out through my colleague who had just finished applying himself. So to apply, I had to find the form – I couldn't find it though, Gunther [the colleague] had to email it to me – fill part of it in online, then print, sign, get my delegate to sign, then scan it, email that to the Executive Director of Students himself [she is outraged at this], he then has to print, sign, scan, then HE sends it on to another department, who press a button that GIVES ME THE RIGHT TO DO MY JOB!"

As she preps, I ask Molly about the classes she will be teaching that day. She explains that she has changed everything since last semester. All of the teaching materials were "terribly outdated". When she spoke to her co-teacher on the course about updating them, he said, "We're too busy to update the teaching, we're too busy to do anything new".

Molly "saw red".

"I just had to say, 'I'm going to end this conversation now', and I had to walk away. Teaching is our JOB. What could be more important than our students? I was just so furious because he just wasn't going to budge. So I just did my own thing, and I'm happy with that decision." She says that her co-teacher is very jaded and puts all of the blame for everything on "The Home Campus" — ie. "there's no point in making changes, The Home Campus won't approve it anyway." For example, the end of semester exam is a multiple choice exam that has been used for years, but he refuses to change it or to allow Molly to change it. She is furious about this.

I comment that she is obviously very passionate about pedagogy, and ask her if she has any interest in working for Teaching and Learning. "No!" She does a double-take as if surprised by the vehemence of her answer, then laughs. "I mean, I'd like to! I think it would be terrific. And it's not that I don't think they do some good work, and I'm not just talking about our T&L team, I'm talking at universities everywhere, they do some good things, but no one listens to them! No one pays real attention to what they're asking for or suggesting. In some ways, it's a bit different here, because T&L seem quite powerful, but they're not changing people's hearts and minds, people just

pay them lip service, tell them what they want to hear, and then go on and keep doing things the ways they've always done things. So no matter how good you are at your job [in T&L], you could never really have an impact. Better that I spend my time in the classroom, affecting students lives one at a time. It's the only way I can be sure what I'm doing is actually going to make a difference."

She goes back to working on her class preparation, then a few moments later, picks up the conversation again.

"Also, if I worked in T&L I'd have to do crazy things like making people rehearse their presentations or coaching them on what to say to who. That whole 'submit your slides' things from Week 7 was just crazy! And I know it's not coming from [a friend in T&L], it's coming from higher up, but I'm not sure from who, or WHY they feel the need to control everything so exactly."

As more people enter the staffroom, the space is becoming noisier and noisier, and it is a relief when we can leave for the classroom.

The overly controlling manner of The Home Campus, and the even more controlling manner of the Teaching and Learning Department were two of the most common complaints made by academics at IVU. Regarding the level of control that The Home Campus had over the course content at IVU, another academic, Carl, told me once that "we're just the checkout chicks¹⁶ — The Home Campus are the ones out back making the burgers. And frankly, we're both serving up shit." In their recent article, "'World-class' fantasies: A neocolonial analysis of international branch campuses", Siltaoja, Juusola, and Kivijärvi (2018, p. 2) argue that IBCs use various forms of "mimicry", a well-known concept developed by postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha (1994/2004). They use this concept to explore how IBCs employ the imaginaries of a "world-class" (read: Western) education to recruit and educate students. The most relevant of these forms to describe the above examples is "cynical mimicry" (p. 11). In cynical mimicry, notions of world-class education and knowledge transfer from metropole home campuses to IBCs on the periphery is problematised and contested, but nonetheless performed. For academic staff, the authors give an example that was very familiar in my own fieldwork, of a lecturer who teaches a class on a topic [labour unions, in that case] that is utterly irrelevant to the life of students on the branch campus because it is not applicable to the host country context. Although this mimicry of the home country campus is performed, it is done so very reluctantly and with a sense of disquiet. Cynical mimicry may involve criticising the constant

¹⁶ 'Checkout chick' is a colloquial and somewhat derogatory term for a salesperson (usually female) working in a low-paid/low-skill cashier position, such as at a supermarket or fast food outlet. See urban dictionary for more information: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=checkout%20chick>

reproductions of the home campus on behalf of the “others” that the foreign academic feels are being patronised or harmed by these practices, as Carl did in the example above.

The other interesting point from my observations of Molly's morning was her analysis of the Teaching and Learning Department (T&L). As she points out, T&L at this university holds a lot of power (as is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4), but it is a similar power to the power of audit described in the introduction (Escobar & Demeritt, 2017; Power, 1999) — the ability to change the way people *report* on things, but very little power to change people's "hearts and minds". This, according to various participants, is because the T&L department does not allow the academics agency over their own work. Requiring academics to rehearse conference presentations in front of the T&L team before having conference funding approved, instructing academics on how to speak to and behave in front of visiting "big wigs", and even making them submit the slides they intend to present to each other during an inter-departmental research day has led many academics to lose their internal locus of control. Consistent with the literature (Ariani, 2012), the feeling that they are mere "checkout chicks" without agency over their academic lives has, in turn, affected their willingness to go above and beyond with their work, or perhaps even, as Molly described it, do their substantive job.

Off to class: Students as a resource for academic adjustment

Most academics at IVU teach between three and six hours a day, four or five days a week, depending on which workload model they have been put on, and what their ratio might be of teaching:research:service. Therefore, on most shadowing days I attended classes, often one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Some of the classes were only an hour or 90 minutes. Others were three to four-hour marathons.



Figure 3: [Left] One of IVU's 500-person lecture theatres. [Right] One of the larger classrooms set up for a tutorial.

The classrooms at IVU were often well-appointed, with a projector screen, a computer, cushioned chairs and ample desks for the students. The rooms around the outer edges of the buildings had large windows with views over a canopy of trees, or the landscaped gardens below. Those in the middle (like the one pictured above) only had windows onto the corridors on either side. Although the classrooms were quite visually appealing, their internal workings left a lot to be desired, according to many of the academics I shadowed. I was warned by one of the lecturers, Paul, that the appeal of the classrooms was "all just a facade":

I've sent countless complaints to the Facilities team, because honestly the electricals in the classrooms are downright dangerous. Never mind that having computer cords all over the floor is a tripping hazard, I'm more concerned about the way the plugs kind of, just, hang out of their sockets when you try to plug things in, like, they just don't quite fit so they just, kind of, hang there tentatively, with the metal prong bits exposed. So quite often that means the prongs aren't connecting with an electricity source, or only sporadically, so if you want to play a CD on a CD player or something, you actually have to stand there and hold the plug into the wall to make the CD player work. Remind me, how are we supposed to be good teachers when we spend this much time distracted by nothing working?!

Paul — lecturer, white, late 30s, male.

Being "a good teacher" at IVU was seen as something of a badge of honour, perhaps more so than in more research-intensive universities, probably because of the university's history as a teaching-only campus, as well as because of the power wielded by the T&L department. It is also beneficial to the academic if they are seen as a good teacher, as it is something that is valued by the students. Further, the students make their positive and negative evaluations public, both through formal channels such as the Student Evaluation Surveys for each class at the end of the semester, and informally, either directly to the teacher, or indirectly via social media sites like "IVU Confessions".

Although fraternising with students socially is frowned upon at IVU, many of the academics I shadowed did invest a lot of energy in cultivating positive professional relationships with their students. Although this was to their benefit in terms of getting a positive "Good Teaching Score" at the end of the semester, it also benefited teachers emotionally, and instrumentally. In a study that I co-authored on student-teacher relationships in the context of expatriate academics in China (Jonasson, Luring, Selmer, & Trembath, 2017), we found that foreign academics relied more heavily on their relationship with their students as a resource that they could use to enhance their adjustment process to

the unfamiliar environment. Positive relationships with host national students not only helped foreign academics learn the norms of their new cultural context but also gave them a feeling of competence. They were then able to draw comfort from this, in the face of often overwhelming feelings of inadequacy caused by a lack of familiarity with the vast range of new tasks and requirements in their new workplace and the host nation.

This was a common experience at my field site also, with many academics, particularly those in their first semester saying things like: "my students, and not letting my students down, that's the only thing keeping me from packing my bags and heading back to [home country]" (Kai — academic, non-white, early 40s, female). On the other hand, those academics who were not able to attain proficiency or rapport in the classroom within that first semester often struggled more than their counterparts with adjustment. One academic, 33-year-old communications lecturer Tara, spoke to me of her first semester at IVU, several years earlier:

It was just awful, you know, because no matter what I did I couldn't get it right. I'm a pretty friendly person, easy to get along with, but I hadn't taught in a context like this before, and I kept pitching it all wrong — sometimes it was way above their heads, other times it was so basic that they complained I was treating them like children. Every time I walked towards the classroom I was just filled with dread. Once, I decided to have a little revision party in the class before the mid-semester exam, used my own money to buy snacks, had a whole gamified lesson plan going on, but I had left something in the staffroom, and when I got back [to the classroom], almost the entire class had disappeared and taken all the snacks with them! I was absolutely devastated, dismissed the rest of the students and spent the rest of the class bawling my eyes out in the toilets. It made everything harder [being seen as a bad teacher], because it's the core thing, you know? If you're not a good teacher, why are you here? It was fine once I'd worked out their level, and I had a really supportive boss and team who really helped, but at the time it felt like I would just never fit in here. It was crushing.

Tara — lecturer, white, early 30s, female.

In some ways, Tara was quite fortunate in that she had "a really supportive boss and team" upon whom she could draw support and comfort in the absence of her relationship with her students. For those who do not have either resource to draw upon, the first semester can be very bleak indeed.

Teachers as an "authentic" resource for student's academic needs

The classroom at IVU is a critical site for the production of social and cultural meaning and action. Not only is it a space in which the academics cultivate some of their most crucial relationships – with their students – but it is also a location where so many things can go wrong. And while the academics are negotiating these challenges, they are also expected, by both the university and the students, to create an authentically excellent production of foreign academic-ness, being both engaging and entertaining for the students while not crossing the line and becoming *too* authentic.

Perhaps controversially, I would liken this "authentic performance to a paying 'other'", to the "bounded authenticity" described in Elizabeth Bernstein's ethnography *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity and the Commerce of Sex* (2007). In this, Bernstein describes how modern sex workers are expected not only to provide access to a body with which a client may conduct a sex act; today's clients expect a level of intimacy that at least appears authentic but without the responsibilities related to the intimacy of a committed couple. Clients are not just buying sex, they are purchasing an intimate relationship, albeit one that is bounded by both time restraints and the lack of obligation to one's partner in the sexual act once that act is complete.

I saw similarities to this description of bounded authenticity in the performances of authenticity that I observed some academics conduct with their students, or with other staff members in various contexts. Consider this example from Leila, a British academic in her first year at IVU, who crossed an invisible boundary of intimacy with one of her students, allowing for too "real" a degree of authenticity to show through. As Christmas approached towards the end of my fieldwork, Leila and I were walking to her classroom when I overheard one of her Vietnamese students ask, "How are you today Miss Leila?" Leila replied to him that she was actually feeling a bit sad, because this would be her first Christmas away from her family and she was really missing home at that moment. The student said "Oh..." then paused for a moment. Then he said, "You know, you really shouldn't have told me that. It's not your place to burden me with your personal problems. You're my teacher. I shouldn't have to know about the things that are making you sad." Leila had strayed beyond the bounds of the authenticity and intimacy with which the student was willing to engage.

Conversely, Jae, a Korean lecturer whose story I will outline in more detail in Chapter 5, did not give his students enough authentic intimacy in his first semester, resulting in a poor "Good Teaching Score" in his end-of-semester student evaluations. In later semesters, he learned to perform a level of intimacy with his students that they found much more authentic, increasing his scores significantly. However, he realised that the *boundaries* of his produced intimacy with students had not been strong enough when one of his students began stalking him, sending him midnight text messages of love and lust in response to his enthusiasm and affection towards his students during class. Thus we can see that the relationships that teachers cultivate with students are critical for their own well-being, but are also fraught with complexity and the confounding factor of student desires.

There's no such thing as a free lunch

After class, it's time for lunch. My shadowees and I would often lunch in the Calmette Cafe — the staff cafe at IVU. Let me give you an example of a typical day at this cafe, while I was shadowing academic Nigel. The tables were filling up as Nigel and I paid for our respective trays of lasagna and enchiladas then made our way to one of the large group tables at the back of the bustling room. It was Anzac Day¹⁷, and Nigel, an Australian academic in his early 60s, had been regaling me with war history all morning as I had shadowed his movements. Two other Australians, Kath, a PhD student in her late 40s, and 33-year-old Tara, a Communications lecturer, were already seated at the table being quizzed about Anzac traditions by Padman, an IT Services Manager from India. Between the two of them, Kath and Tara found that they didn't know very much about Anzac Day, although they had attended Anzac Day ceremonies through school as all Australian children do. They did, however, agree that Anzac Day was used to glorify war, and they were generally opposed to its "celebration". Nigel, my shadowee, was able to tell Padman a lot more, and it was interesting to watch the Australians at the table repeat, over and over again throughout this telling, that Australia had been in the wrong, particularly during the Vietnam War, and that Australia and "the West" were "the bad guys".

As we sat discussing this, Becca, another Australian, sat down and gleefully showed us an Anzac Biscuit, wrapped tightly in plastic cling wrap, that she had purchased from the counter

¹⁷ Although Anzac Day is obviously of great importance in Australia, on the highly multicultural IVU campus, for most of the campus it was just another day. The kinds of conversations that happened at the table that day are actually quite typical of the conversations I overheard on many occasions, because comparisons of national cultures was a common topic of conversation.

— a sweet, chewy treat, popularised during WWI and now an exemplary feature of the Australian culinary consciousness. It wasn't quite the right colour or shape, the table concurred, but as Becca shared the cookie around, most agreed that the taste was pretty close. Nigel lamented that he had been hoping (in vain) for hot cross buns at Easter time, to murmured agreement from several other Westerners and a Filipina academic who had joined the table. PhD student Kath, a relative newcomer to IVU who had lived in Cambodia for many years before coming to Vietnam, was outraged by this. "Why would there be hot cross buns in a country that doesn't celebrate Easter? Or Anzac Biscuits for that matter?" she asked scornfully. Fellow Australian Tara tried to repair the conversation, saying that The Calmette had a longstanding tradition of celebrating the national events or holidays of IVU's various feeder universities, both through their food offerings and their counter decorations. As Becca dismantled the biscuit with nimble fingers and popped the morsels in her mouth, Nigel added that he thought it was just a nice way to help staff feel comfortable and at home in their new environment. Kath appeared baffled. Leaning closer to me, she murmured, "if people want to feel comfortable and at home, why not stay at home and feel comfortable there?" She told me later that day, privately, that she found the attitudes of many of the IVU staff completely incomprehensible, and couldn't help but judge.

National Identity

Identity is not immutable. The monumental body of contemporary research on identity, although I cannot do it justice here, does generally agree that an individual's identity is fluid; a moving, changing construct, and by this same logic, a construction, or even multiple, simultaneous constructions, as identity can be fractured and even contradictory (Brown, 2015, 2017; Fechter, 2007; Leonard, 2010). That said, they often do not feel this way to individuals who may categorise themselves based on certain identities. Thus, identity in this thesis is considered to be a complex phenomenon that changes not only over time and in response to the contexts we find ourselves in, but also depending on who is making the observation – whether we are observing and defining our own identity, or someone else is defining us from an outsider's perspective. In both cases, the literature indicates that identity is constituted relationally, and therefore of anthropological interest.

When constituting one's *national* identity, specifically, one has a range of relations through which to define oneself. When you are in a relatively homogenous cultural environment, you might construct your national identity via messaging from your family, friends, and the media,

for example. But when you move to a new country, you may experience “fish out of water syndrome” where, for the first time, you become aware that you are a fish, that you are swimming in this thing called water, that water is not the only place to live and that a fish is not the only creature one could be. Pauline Leonard (2010) describes this more elegantly in her ethnography of British expatriates in Hong Kong when she says that “for some, race may become visibly significant for the first time... brought about as a result of their displacement to a new and different context.” In the case of many migrants, one's national identity then moves from being constituted relationally, through those who are similar to oneself, to instead defining oneself in opposition to the culture of the host country. Migrants often do this by using what organisational anthropologist Fiona Moore (2011), describes as “folk definitions of national identity” (p. 659), which draw on widely held stereotypes of different nations and cultures.

In an organisational environment such as IVU, where the academics hail from 28 different nations, foreigners constitute their national identities not only relative to the national culture of the host country — Vietnam — but also relative to the cultures of a plethora of foreign colleagues. They are not only confronted with new cultural and organisational environments but also with multiple ways of knowing and being that they may never have encountered before. Their entire epistemology, which they may never have reflected upon as something that *could* be up for negotiation, may for the first time be challenged, something that they have to question, potentially leading to an identity crisis (Mercer, 1991).

The expatriation management literature has long been interested in the identity crises and transformations wrought by international mobility. Expatriates, according to this literature, often struggle to determine how much of their identity they must relinquish to adapt to the new environment, versus how much they must retain to maintain their sense of a continued “self”. Osland (1995, p. 100) labelled this an “expatriate identity paradox”. She demonstrates in her research on American expatriate managers that it is not uncommon for expatriates to find themselves both, “giving up their own cultural ideas and behaviours in order to be successful in their new cultural environment, while simultaneously finding their own cultural values strengthening as a result of this exposure to other cultures,” (p. 101). I would posit that this is a factor in what we saw at lunch that day in the Calmette Cafe.

In an ordinary, Australian context, an Anzac Biscuit is relatively benign. But on the occasion in question, this Anzac Biscuit became a powerful source of cultural anxieties. For Nigel, the biscuit connected him to "home" — it helped him feel comfortable in a place where most things felt unfamiliar. For Kath on the other hand, who had been away from Australia for many years, the biscuit was a symbol of ongoing Australian imperialism and an object of scorn. That said, it was also a safer recipient for her disdain than the other Australians at the table. She could criticise the existence of the *biscuit* publicly, although chose to only comment about the implications of her criticism to me in an aside and to save her blatant criticism of the other academics for a private moment later.

For Tara, the biscuit seemed to represent potentiality. She saw its existence as an opportunity for the Australians at IVU to come together, celebrate their national identity, and share it with others. In spite of the apparent shame that she and others expressed to Padman when discussing Australians as "the bad guys" and the way that Anzac Day "glorifies war", she still saw this mundane item as a potential rallying point. She seemed to hold deep ambivalence about her own national identity. As Sarah Maddison (2012) points out in her article on the relationship between postcolonial guilt and national identity in Australia, "the founding of the Australian state through violence and dispossession has left a deep, psychological legacy with significant contemporary implications..." (p. 696). She continues, "[w]hen a sense of national identity is connected to the actions of our forebears and ancestors, and where it is known that our forebears and ancestors committed harms and atrocities, it follows that collective guilt may be a salient component of our national identity," (p. 699). The Australians at the table on this Anzac Day, I argue, were expressing this sense of collective guilt, and attempting to distance themselves from the actions of said forebears and ancestors by disavowing their participation in war. However, the Anzac Biscuit, as a beloved symbol of Australian national identity, created dissonance in this context for several of the Australians at the table — although on the one hand, it represented Anzac Day, and something to be disavowed, it also represented home, something familiar and safe in an unfamiliar and often unsettling environment.

When Nigel and Kath's opinions of the biscuit diverged, this marked a point where the biscuit had become a line in the sand. At this point, the Australians at the table needed to either unite around a cohesive national identity or position themselves in opposition to each other to create a new kind of national identity. This different national identity is what Fechter

(2007), in her ethnography of German expatriates in Indonesia, might call the "expatriate identity" (p. 121), which is more cosmopolitan, less parochial than the culture of the expatriate's home country, but still very distinct from the national culture of the host country. Kath was particularly obvious in her constitution of an expatriate identity and went so far as to tell me at one point that, despite her strong Australian accent, and her stated ties to Australia, "home is not Australia for me. I have homes all over the world." Despite the argued immutability of identities, Kath seems to *feel* that her identity as a global citizen is stable and durable, and this feeling is as strong an actant in the network of her identity as any other.

For each of the Australians at the table, this commonplace discussion of Anzac Day, complete with associated materiality, catalysed a need to do what I would call "national identity work". Although in this example the majority of the actors were of the same nationality, they were not free, in the way they might have been if they had been in Australia at the time, to assume any homogeneity in their relations to each other. As "fish out of water", they needed to consider the ramifications of any position they chose to take about Anzac Day and its trappings in light of a much broader context. This need to "pick a side" led Nigel to strengthen his ties to his home country, Kath distanced herself further, and Tara experienced great anxiety as she attempted to negotiate these polarised positions.

Administrivia: Not so trivial?

The period after lunch was often a time for academics to plough through some of their administrative work. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in addition to the typical academic service tasks of meetings with students, answering emails, or reviewing papers, IVU academics also do a lot of invisible work to be able to do their substantive work. This included things like filling out immigration forms for the HR department to lodge on their behalf or dealing with online banking issues, either with their Vietnamese banks or in their home country. These kinds of things were not directly related to the academics' work, but without being cleared by immigration, they couldn't stay in the country; without access to their funds, they couldn't survive for very long. As I also mentioned in the introduction, it surprised me enormously how much of both the visible and invisible work of these academics revolved around marketing the university. For example, the day I shadowed Kas, a white, Northern European academic in his early 30s, he spent a significant portion of his administration time scanning the pages of his passport and filling out forms to send to the Vietnamese police, in order to be allowed to do student recruitment drives at high schools or

universities in other provinces of Vietnam. In this excerpt from my field notes, I am questioning Kas about the marketing tasks he does for the university. We are sitting at his desk in the open-plan office, with his integrated calendar and task manager open on his desktop.

Kas goes to his calendar, sees an item — "SSIS discussion" — then goes back to his email and writes to a colleague about their upcoming visit to a local primary school. I ask what this item is about.

"Oh, this is part of our service. We visit schools, and we have students visit us because we have very nice facilities. We have a lot of work to do in Vietnam to show people what Engineering is. People here think Engineering is a dirty job, if you're an engineer you will be covered in oil in a dirty workshop, the pay is really low. They think it's being a mechanic. So we have to show them, 'no, Engineers make a lot of money, they actually make things and they make a lot of money'. We talk to them about Bill Gates and Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg — these guys didn't have business training, they had engineering training. So I've done three... no, four... trips to the provinces now, to talk to parents and students and show them about our program."

I ask how he feels about doing so much marketing for the program.

"It's normal, it's necessary. We're all doing it. And the marketers, it's apparent that even the best marketers cannot promote the program the way an academic can. Because we can talk about how the program really is, what we do, what will come next — these are things marketers can't get to the heart of. So. It's just part of being an academic, just part of the job, it's fine."

I ask if he did much of this at his previous university (in New Zealand). He is thoughtful.

"Yes, but not so much, and we didn't need to promote ourselves locally. In the local market in Auckland, we are just another uni in the market. But internationally, yes. That was necessary. Here, we need to do both. We need to promote the program AND Engineering as a career path in the local market. Internationally, it's promoting our program and our facilities. And we all have to do this. M [one of the department managers] went to the Philippines, D [one of the other department managers] goes regularly to India and Sri Lanka, I've been to Mauritius. And you could see from my class this morning. We have American students, Sri Lankan students. So it's good, it's working."

Marketing scholars Gelb and Rangarajan (2014) demonstrate that the need to consider employees as contributors to "brand equity" is "universal" to all kinds of businesses, and even to non-profit organisations because the way employees feel about their employer will be

dispersed amongst that employee's networks beyond the organisation. IVU has taken this notion a step further into the realm of making academics into "brand ambassadors". However, brand ambassadorship is often something that is supposed to happen organically, and outside the scope of the employees' job role:

Beyond the role of their job description, [employees] can represent the brand to customers, potential customers, the public at large, and even to potential new employees...brand ambassadors can be "created" if firms educate employees about their importance in maintaining the corporate reputation. (Gelb & Rangarajan, 2014, p. 99)

At IVU, the academics are very much aware of their "value-add" in the marketing process. However, merely educating them about their "importance in maintaining the corporate reputation" has not had the universal effect of turning employees into willing brand ambassadors. Various sources — several senior executives, some of the marketing staff, and of course a range of academics themselves, told me that there is a "lingering perception" that marketing should not be part of the academic's role in a university. "We are still getting a lot of pushback, but not as much as we used to," said one marketing officer. However, as one of the senior executives indicated, "if academics don't want to be involved in promoting the university, they shouldn't be here. It's part of your job now. No matter where you work [as an academic]. Yeah. There are expectations, and that's why it's included in the service component — it's academic service."

In their article, "'That's not my job': Exploring the employee perspective in the development of brand ambassadors", about employee brand commitment in the hospitality industry, Xiong, King and Piehler (2013) point out that there is a significant difference between employees "doing what they're told" (p. 349) and having actual, affective commitment to the brand. Further, this difference affects the extent and effectiveness of employee branding behaviours and activities. By relabelling brand ambassadorship as "academic service" and making it compulsory, IVU has ensured that academics will undertake marketing activities on behalf of the university, but *not* that they will do so effectively.

God, Gold and Glory, the contested missions of an IBC

By 3 pm, attention spans would typically begin to wane as the post-lunch slump would hit. Mid-afternoon was, therefore, an ideal time to ask my shadowees to reflect on their experiences at IVU and as a foreign academic — they weren't working anyway! Occasionally,

my shadowees used this time to leave campus, often to undertake "life-administration" like banking or parenting. In this excerpt from my field notes, my shadowee had stepped out to a parent-teacher interview that I could not attend, so I was chatting to Kevin, a non-academic manager (who had been an academic at IVU but had switched to a corporate role) who had "had an epiphany" about my thesis topic. We had moved into one of the small, sterile white meeting rooms dotted around the staffroom area, where Kevin could take advantage of the free-standing whiteboard to visually outline his idea to me (using, to his frustration, a marker that was nearly out of ink).

"I've been thinking about our conversation from a few days ago," he said, "when we were talking about how conflicted — and conflicting — the mission of the university is here. Is the mission of IVU to make a profit for The Home Campus? Is it about internationalisation and globalisation strategies for The Home Campus? Is it about helping Vietnam to develop? And I've been thinking, it's probably about all of those things, but the problem is that those things all have conflicting goals. And I think one of the reasons for the misery and confusion with the academic staff here is that they can't work out what the purpose of IVU actually is, so they don't know what to get on board with."

From here, he said, he had started to think about what a mission is, and this got him thinking about Christian missionaries and what their goals had been, and how the academics who come to IVU often have some very similar goals. He pointed out that, although academia is not actually a religion, it does share a lot of the same traits. Scribbling all over the whiteboard, we talked about the historical idea of going on a mission for God, Gold and Glory, and how again, these are three very conflicting ideas with different ultimate purposes. We decided that the 'God' metaphor would be the goal of developing Vietnam through the provision of world-class education and that this is the university's manifest motivation, the one that IVU promotes in its literature to the outside world. But, drawing downward-pointing arrows beneath the word 'God', we agreed that there were indeed two latent motivations undermining and problematising this ultimate purpose. Under one downward arrow, he wrote "Gold — profit for The Home Campus". Under the other, he wrote "Glory" which we decided meant that IVU was able to claim 'world-class' education as superior to Vietnamese education and that The Home Campus was able to claim that they were a 'truly internationalised university'.

At this point, Kevin was getting quite excited — we were on a roll. 'What would happen if we applied the same thinking to individual academics?' he asked. We cleaned a section off the board and started again. At a manifest level, Kevin said, many of the academics at IVU claim to have come to Vietnam because they wanted to make a difference. "While that may be true," he said, "it might be genuinely their core reason for coming here, or at least for why they tell themselves they

are coming here, there is also glory for them, in the sense that it's easier to move ahead here, into higher level roles, to be a big fish in a little pond. There's also the 'fame' (he made somewhat sarcastic quote marks in the air with his fingers and rolled his eyes) of working at 'the Ivy League of Vietnam' (which often comes with telling Vietnamese people in shops that you work at IVU, as you may recall from the introduction chapter)." He added the appropriate sections to the diagram.

"And then there's also a little bit of gold, not enough mind you, but the money you make here is much more than the cost of living requires, so you can live really well, even though the money is so much less than you would be making if you did the same work in a Western context. But you can live like a king if you're not worried about what comes next, after Vietnam."

Kevin — non-academic manager, white, early 40s, male

Identities in and of universities: The work of identity creation and maintenance in a contested environment

Although there are many different definitions of workplace identity, this thesis partially employs Brown's (2015, 2017) conception, as it is particularly attentive to the entanglement of identities in both home and work life. Brown claims that there is an emergent consensus amongst scholars in sociology and social psychology around the notion that identity "refers to the meanings that individuals attach reflexively to themselves, developed and sustained through processes of social interaction as they seek to address the question 'who am I?'" (Brown, 2015). Identity work, in Brown's view, is the work that you do to create, sustain and perform your various identities, in relation and response to the perspectives that those *around you* hold *about you*, and to maintain a sense of coherence and distinctiveness that sets you apart from others. As with the other concepts discussed in this thesis, I do not write about identity as a fixed entity. Instead, like Visscher, Heusinkveld, & O'Mahoney (2018), I lean towards Levi-Strauss's notion of "bricolage" as a way of considering identity and identity work as "always a partial accomplishment, fraught with inconsistencies, tensions and change...particularly useful in studying professional identities, because it highlights the "'culturally appropriate self' towards which professionals aspire, even if the achievement of such identities is temporary, provisional or even frustrated." (Visscher et al., 2018). Identity work is continuous, and the effect of this is that one's identity is fluid; a moving, changing construct, and by this same logic, a *construction*.

There is, however, some disagreement amongst theorists of identity about the “materials” from which an identity can be constructed. Brown (2017), following a review of the literature on identity work in the workplace, found five ways in which researchers have explored the work that employees do to manage their identities. These are: discursively, by managing what they say; dramaturgically, by managing what they display of and on their bodies and faces; symbolically, in how they manage the objects within their social worlds; socio-cognitively, through cognitive mechanisms; and psychodynamically via subconscious processes. Using this logic, I argue that a person's identity is an assemblage that is always being made in the moment. The actants in this assemblage are, as suggested by Brown, the things people say *to* themselves *about* themselves, sometimes based on the things others have said to them and about them; the things they say to themselves and others about the world they live in; the things they do; and the material objects that they choose to interact with and use to present themselves via. In this way, I am arguing that identity (and by extension, a person's selfhood) is constructed out of the actants enrolled in the network at any given point in time. Consequently, an identity network/assemblage can be destabilised when one or more of the actants is removed, becomes unavailable or actively resists further participation in the network. So using the network motif as a tool to think through identity, then one might imagine that if a person's physical body is removed from a previously stable network, their identity network is, by necessity, going to be significantly destabilised.

If this is true, then an academic's identity may appear relatively durable and stable if they have been working in the same place for a long time and experienced minimal disruption to their routine experience. The ideas and people (or types of people) they have been interacting with; the way they present themselves within their academic demesne; and the physical objects that may have come to symbolise their academic-ness *to themselves* may not have changed in many years. As a consequence, this may have brought their identity network to a level of stability that gives it the appearance of being fixed. But in the “modern era” of higher education, this is an unlikely scenario — as discussed above, budget cuts, changes to curricula based on student evaluations and digital disruptions all contribute to an unstable higher education network that cannot help but make changes to the identity networks of the academics entangled therein.

Many academics have reported increased levels of stress and decreased levels of productivity under these circumstances (Evans, Bira, Gastelum, Weiss, & Vanderford, 2018;

Torp, Lysfjord, & Midje, 2018; Winefield, Boyd, Saebel, & Pignata, 2008). So it stands to reason that if disruptions to the higher education network catalyse disruptions to the identity of the academics, that disruptions to the academics themselves will be similarly destabilising. This leads us to the issue of academic mobility. When academics move to a new country, their identity networks can no longer be constituted of the same actants. The people they interact with will be different, are more likely to have differing backgrounds, cultures and experiences from their own. The ideas they are surrounded with may conflict with their own beliefs and values. The familiar symbols of academia that they have drawn on in the past to represent their identities to themselves and to others may no longer be available or may have drastically changed. In short, with this much destabilisation, it will require work to re-establish the assemblage.

The expatriation management literature has long been interested in the identity crises and transformations wrought by international mobility. As aforementioned, expatriates often struggle with the "expatriate identity paradox" (Osland, 1995, p.100) finding the balance between giving up vs. maintaining their existing identity. Chan (2014) found, in her thesis on American managers in South Korea, that those who found a balance between the two were most likely to be successful professionally. However, for academics, this balance may not be the same, given that the academic identity is vocational — that is to say, that academics are more likely to see their work as pivotal not only to their lives but also to their constitution of self. Relinquishing too much of their academic identity in seeking this balance with adaptation to a new national culture is thus more likely to invoke crisis than it may do in a person whose job symbolises precisely that — a job, rather than a symbol of their purpose in life.

University identities

The challenges to identity presented to foreign academics by the new and overlapping cultural environments of Vietnam and IVU present just some of the catalysts to change for these academics' identities. However, this is compounded, I argue, by the identity work being undertaken by the assemblage that is "the university" IVU. In this thesis, as mentioned in the introduction, I argue that it is not only humans who have identities, but universities also. These identities are constructed, as they are with people, from the things that the university says about itself to its staff and students, and to outsiders, the ways that it displays itself, and the objects it uses to demonstrate its values (Brown, 2017). On an international branch campus like IVU, this can lead to a particularly confused and confusing dissonance between multiple possible identities for the university that in turn can lead to increased identity work

for the academics employed there. And when the university's identity becomes synonymous with its image, as is the case in the overwhelming drive to produce marketable authenticity at IVU, this can catalyse a range of unintended (and often nefarious) consequences for and within the foreign academics, as I lay out in greater detail in Chapters 3 through 6.

Good evening Vietnam

By 5:15pm, the IVU campus would be visibly winding down for the day. Rivers of helmeted students would flow upwards from the motorbike carpark beneath the main academic building and out onto the busy highway. A minority of students, the wealthier ones, would head out onto the road to greet idling Audis and BMWs, their family's chauffeur waiting patiently at the wheel. Some of the staff, both foreign and Vietnamese, would head towards the 5.20pm staff shuttle bus, waving to their counterparts who rode their own motorbikes, and to those who caught taxis or *xe ôms* (motorbike taxis) home. Many more remained at their desks, working well into the dark of the night.

Occasionally I caught the staff bus home with whichever of my participants I had been shadowing that day, having been informed that this was where most of the “internal communication” (read: gossip) was shared between different departments. On one such occasion, I ended up sitting beside one of the university's executives. As we pulled out onto the highway, we both noted the blinding lights of the sports stadium that had recently sprung up at a Vietnamese university just down the road from IVU. We marvelled at how professional it looked — it wasn't entirely visible from the road, but we had both seen it from the panoramic windows in the President of IVU's office. “The Higher Ed environment here in Vietnam is just getting so much more competitive,” he said to me. “One of our biggest drawcards has always been our facilities. But just look at that. We're going to have to lift our game if we want to stay in the race.”

Higher Education and Internationalisation in Vietnam¹⁸

When the Vietnamese government invited IVU to set up in Ho Chi Minh City approximately ten years ago, it was with the stated mandate that this new university would help Vietnam's higher education sector to pursue international standards and recognition, and prepare Vietnam's youth for global careers. One of the primary goals of the country's Socio-Economic

¹⁸ This section was presented as part of a paper titled “Floating Academy, Invisible work of Foreign Academics in Vietnam”, at the Vietnam Update Conference, 2017.

Development Plan 2006-2010 was to encourage foreign universities to establish campuses on Vietnamese soil, and to encourage foreign academics to come to Vietnam to teach and do research, to continue Vietnam's globally-oriented development in the education sector (Van Kham, 2017). Ten years on, IVU remains one of only a handful of international branch campuses in Vietnam, and one of the few that is wholly foreign-owned and operated independently of the Vietnamese government.

Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has described two critical aims in the creation of an open, globally connected and regionally competitive Vietnamese Education Sector (Nguyen, Vickers, Ly, & Tran, 2016). The first is for students to gain access to further education or employment opportunities outside of Vietnam. The second is to prepare for work in multinationals within the homeland. Thus, the internationalisation of universities is many ways considered a national capacity-building exercise (Nguyen et al., 2016). These factors have combined to create an environment in which not only are foreign universities building campuses within Vietnamese borders, but Vietnamese universities are seeking partnerships with foreign universities in order to help create and maintain "international standards" as well as capture some of the revenue created by student demand for an international education (Nguyen et al., 2016). According to my informants, this seemingly insatiable demand from Vietnamese students (and their parents) for internationalisation seems to be directly tied to notions of Western "excellence" and "prestige" — as lecturer Carl succinctly described it once, "they all think 'West is Best'". With shiny new Vietnamese universities (like the one the IVU staff bus passes in its journey to shuttle staff "back to Vietnam" at the end of the day) implementing bold internationalisation plans, partnering with foreign universities, employing more foreign academics and even beginning to teach coursework in English, competition to meet student demand in Vietnam is increasing. This, I would argue, is a core component of why IVU has become so focused on producing marketable authenticity, particularly of the kind that makes them visibly attractive to a "West-Obsessed" Vietnamese market.

Conclusion

In *Chapter 1: IVU Land and Surrounds*, I've introduced you to some of the people, objects and ideas that populate IVU as a contested site imbued with the various ideologies of neoliberalism, postcolonialism and globalisation. By exploring some of the broader pressures informing the quotidian experiences of the people and things on this international branch

campus, I've equipped you with a background understanding of IBCs as sites where these forces intersect. Further, by demonstrating these phenomena, I have set you up to understand how and why marketable authenticity is prioritised and produced at IVU. In the next chapter, I will build on the notions of prestige and images of internationalisation touched on in the previous section, to demonstrate what marketable authenticity can look like in different contexts.

And finally, for anyone who was wondering: surprisingly extensive Googling has led me to the conclusion that SAD, when written on ceiling tubes, stands for Supply Air Diffuser, with the arrow indicating which way the air conditioning is flowing through the tubing.

It will never, however, have that meaning for the academics of IVU-Land.

Chapter 2: Producing Authenticity, Seeking Prestige and Marketing to the Masses

The Harvard of Vietnam

One sweltering Saturday, I accompanied one of my research participants, Laura, an Anglo-Australian lecturer in her early 40s, into District 1 of Ho Chi Minh City to get some new clothes tailored for work. As we weaved our way in and out of the tightly-packed tailor shops and tourist traps along Bùi Viện Street in the heart of the backpacker district, we chatted — always in English — to the vendors and tailors who showed interest in our presence. More than once, the conversation went like this:

Vendor: Do you live in Vietnam or are you here for travel?

Laura: I work here.

Vendor: You teach English?

Laura: No, I'm a lecturer at the International-Vietnamese University. [Vendor stares blankly.] At IVU?

Vendor: Oh, Ivy U! Wow, so Ivy League, you work at the Harvard of Vietnam¹⁹!

Each time this happened, Laura seemed simultaneously pleased and embarrassed. Later that afternoon, she told me over a *cà phê sữa đá*, a delicious Vietnamese iced coffee with condensed milk and loads of sugar, that this happens frequently, and she never wants to criticise the university in front of an outsider, because the students rely on IVU's reputation in Vietnam to get good jobs upon graduation.

“But let's face it,” she said to me, “IVU ain't no Harvard. Not by a long shot. On the other hand, I will admit it's kinda nice that people think I work somewhere famous.”

¹⁹ IVU is a pseudonym, so this conversation is obviously modified. However, the conversation itself was very similar, involving an acronym that locals had slung together, turning it into a word, and followed by a comment regarding ‘the Harvard of Vietnam’. So, although the Ivy U pun is fictional, it is nonetheless still indicative of how conversations like this played out.

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I will explore the *desired* outcome of marketable academic authenticity — prestige. As I move through the rest of this thesis, from Chapter 3 through to Chapter 6 and even in the Conclusion, I will concentrate more on the range of negative, or at least unintended, consequences of IVU's efforts to produce marketable authenticity. However, before I do that, it is useful first to ask what would motivate IVU as an institution to conduct these efforts with such vigour that they often become the campus's highest priority? I will argue that IVU needs to be always in pursuit of prestige (by producing marketable authenticity) because, contrary to the perceptions of most of IVU's academics, these constant prestige-seeking activities are essential for IVU's survival in Vietnam.

I will make this argument in three parts. First, I will unpack what prestige is in the context of higher education, exploring the differences between *having* prestige and *seeking* prestige by making a brief comparison between IVU, “the Harvard of Vietnam”, and the “real” Harvard and other Ivy League universities in the USA. Next, I will explicitly examine the motivations that IVU had for seeking prestige via the production of marketable authenticity. Finally, I will provide a case study of IVU's graduation ceremonies as a critical site for the production of prestige. This last section will demonstrate the discomfort that prestige-seeking activities caused the academics at IVU during my fieldwork, leading to an exploration of the unintended consequences of producing marketable authenticity in ensuing chapters.

A Web of Prestige

Prestige is a problematic term, with a range of meanings in use. Its origin in the Latin word “*praestigium*”, meaning “trick” or “stratagem”, suggests one difficulty with it: we do not always like to admit that we do anything in order to gain or retain prestige. The word carries connotations of caring more for appearance than for substance, of over-valuing the opinions of others. (Blackmore, 2016, p. 4)

In the global higher education sector, the desire for prestige often goes unquestioned — surely every university wants it, but very few universities can truly be said to have it. Further, prestige is socially constituted; it must be conferred upon a

university by a *group* of people, who all agree that this university *should* be, *and is*, held in high esteem. As Blackmore (2016) points out, the group does not need to be large, but the members of the group do need to have the resources to make their opinions stick. It is therefore not something that a university can manufacture on its own — it can only ever emerge collaboratively, via a network of human and non-human actors.

This notion will perhaps become clearer via a network metaphor. Imagine the prestige of a university as a spider's web of intersecting actors, each a silvery thread that crosses the paths of other threads to form a net. If the web is relatively new and only has a few thin threads to it, then certainly a small spider may be able to dance lightly along its pathways. It may be strong enough to catch small insects if they don't fight too hard. However, the web is unlikely to be able to withstand any kind of force, more or less a deliberate attack. On the other hand, what if the web has been there a long time, and the spider has been adding more and more threads? As leaves or bugs have become entangled with the weave, the spider has enmeshed them into the network, giving the web even more anchor points, and thus even greater strength. As the spider has gotten older and stronger, the threads she produces become tougher also. An errant moth that could do serious damage to a new web would merely be frozen mid-flight by this older web. This is not to say that a more mature spider web is entirely immune to damage. If one small hole leads to another small hole to yet another, then these many small holes will eventually corrupt the structural integrity of the web. And the most robust spider's web will not stand a chance if a bear barrels through it.

Thus, like a strong and stable spiderweb, a prestige network takes a long time to build, although it is generous in the way that it spreads itself around. Prestige refracts, like light in a hall of mirrors. Individuals can have the light of prestige shone upon them, and become prestigious by association; Duff McDonald, in his incisive analysis of Harvard Business School, entitled *The Golden Passport* (2017), suggests that this is why so many Harvard graduates flock to Wall Street. It is not (only) for the money, but for the prestige of being a member of America's most highly esteemed occupation. New graduates from Harvard Business School may still be like the new spiderweb themselves, but they are enmeshing their relatively feeble web with that of an ancient

and powerful one. They are both drawing from the larger web's apparent durability for protection, as well as strengthening it further with their presence.

In their recent ethnography *Discreet Power: How the World Economic Forum Shapes Market Agendas*, anthropologists Christina Garsten and Adrienne Sorböm (2018), describe a similar process regarding how the World Economic Forum (the WEF or the Forum), a globally-oriented, “small and lean” (p. 17), non-profit think tank with no legal mandate, both acquires and bestows authority. They explain that the participation of high profile CEOs; high ranking managers, officers and entrepreneurs; and even celebrities in WEF meetings lends status, prestige and legitimacy to the Forum, thus “vesting the WEF with the authority of a political actor” (p. 76). The WEF then refracts that prestige back out to invitees, giving them authority and legitimacy to perform in global markets. I would go a step further and include the way that material objects are actors that both attract and refract prestige. Consider the glamour that is associated with the annual WEF meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The Swiss ski resort as venue, the outfits (“elegant business suits and overcoats...and briefcases sporting the WEF logo,” p. 3), the “conspicuously abundant” prestige cars (p. 3), and the exclusivity enforced by physical tokens like security badges and barbed wire fences, all form part of, and help to strengthen, the prestige network that the WEF is building.

As with the WEF, universities seeking prestige must also engage with a broad series of actants for a prestige network to build. Funds, facilities, faculty, a spotless record (or close enough), a good relationship with whatever gatekeepers could prevent prestige from growing, such as government or industry influencers, and most importantly, the high esteem of a number of influential external individuals: all of these elements interweave and tie together over time to build prestige. Circuitously then, the more actants a university has working for and with it to build prestige, and the longer that network collaborates cohesively, bedding down those pathways to success and strength, the more prestige will grow.

Economists Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2002/2017) in their foundational comparative study of university prestige in the US, support this idea. They posit that prestige can be generated in universities specifically via three key prestige-generators:

the quality of students, of research, and of sports²⁰. They further claim that investment in any combination of these three has the potential to build greater prestige, but again, *only over very long periods of time*. This is because the outcomes of higher education at an individual level (the primary one being increased earning potential) become evident over decades or whole careers. Similarly, the benefits of higher education for society are not only a slow burn but are also difficult to disentangle from other factors that contribute to economic growth, and thus hard to prove. As a consequence, prestige can only build slowly, but once it has been obtained, it is usually very slow to decline.

According to these economists, higher education institutions can invest in building either or both reputation and prestige, because they are not synonymous terms. Although both can convey information to “customers” about the quality/ies of the institution, the ever-favourable “prestige” relies on proxy indicators to demonstrate value, while “reputation” (which can be either positive or negative) more directly correlates to whether or not an organisation is visibly meeting customers’ explicit desires. The proxy indicators that prestige may use include, according to the authors, “the range of activities supported by the institution; aspects of its physical infrastructure, the nature of its production process, or the type of customers it serves,” (p. 28). In the case of higher education, “[i]nstitutions operating in these [prestige] markets thus develop a strong reputation by ‘looking right’, rather than directly meeting the primary demands of customers,” (Brewer et al., 2002/2017, p. 28).

This is where marketable authenticity comes in. While prestige cannot be manufactured without collaboration between the university and a range of other *external* actors, marketable authenticity can be produced from within. I argue in this thesis that the goal of producing marketable authenticity is to convince those external actors that they are seeing or experiencing a genuine, original or traditional form of the good or service they are being persuaded to purchase (in this case, Western education) and that this authenticity is of value to them. What this then equates to, is that one of the critical goals of producing marketable authenticity is to convince external others to collaborate with the university in *manufacturing* prestige.

²⁰ Note that this is a US-based study and that sport-related factors are much more common indicators of prestige in the US than in most other locations.

Let's take a moment to look at universities that have had prestige conferred upon them, and compare them to those who haven't, to explore this difference between possessing and manufacturing prestige.

The Ivy League

The "Ivy League" collegiate athletic conference (NCAA Division I) was actually officially established in 1954...Over the years the "Ivy League" came to describe the schools' reputations of academic excellence, highly selective admission process, and enviable career opportunities for students. And those impressive reputations are well founded. These institutions are home to some of the most cutting-edge facilities in the world, their faculty members are leaders in their fields, and their alumni are highly accomplished as well. (Hodon, n.d. "What's So Special About the Ivy League?" on CollegeXPress.com)

The above quote demonstrates all the elements used to define prestige in the previous section. The Ivy League universities in the US, consisting of eight elite, private institutions who originally came together to compete in sports, are all "old" (by the standards of American higher education) — the oldest, Harvard, was established in 1636; the youngest, Cornell, in 1865. Thus they have had ample *time* to establish their prestige networks. Further, their networks are what Barnacle and Mewburn (2010) would describe as "highly built" (p. 439), meaning that there is a level of complexity in the network that lends it strength and the appearance of stability. Complexity, I would argue, is an effect of the refraction process I discussed in the previous section, which can actually have either positive or negative results. For example, the above description of the Ivies claims that they boast academic excellence, as well as a highly selective admissions process. One could, of course, argue that part of the reason for the academic excellence is because of the highly selective admissions process. That said, the reason that these universities can afford to be so highly selective is that what they have to offer is so highly sought after, in part due to their reputation for academic excellence. The same could be said for each of the descriptors above, as they are all equally interdependent, both causing each other and being caused by each other. This creates what I will call a "positive refraction effect" — a form of perpetual amplification of positive elements.

Having vs. Seeking Prestige

Another salient point in the above passage is the author's distinction between the Ivies' prestigious images, and their substance, pointing out that, "those impressive reputations are well-founded". This is an important aspect of the prestige networks of elite universities — they have both positive reputations and the evidence to back those reputations up. This is a critical difference between universities that possess prestige, and what Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2002/2017) call "prestige-seeking universities". In something of an unusual move for economists, the authors conducted an "industry study" (p. 3) that involved 26 site visits to different types of higher education institutions, at which they undertook observations of, and interviews with, administrators, students and faculty. From this, they concluded that universities could be categorised as either (a) maintaining existing prestige, (b) seeking prestige, (c) or maintaining/seeking reputation. As mentioned above, they define the difference between prestige and reputation as being about image versus application. Prestigious universities are identifiable via visual indicators of excellence (the substance is assumed, and this is a safe assumption), while universities focused on reputation cannot rely on optics; they must actually do things (and specifically, things that their customers want them to do) to maintain or improve their status. Prestige-seekers do not currently have high prestige but are investing money and efforts in trying to attain prestige by building their prestige networks. Brewer, Gates and Goldman give the example of "University D", a state-funded university in the US. In University D's favour, it is part of a system of highly regarded universities, has a full range of graduate and undergraduate programs yet is small enough to offer students the "personal touch" (p. 109), and has the highest graduation rates and lowest time-to-degree rates of any of the state's universities. Working against University D, however, is its location in an economically-disadvantaged and aesthetically unattractive locality, its corresponding reputation for being a "backwater" (p. 109), its low ranking compared to other state-system campuses in relation to average scores and grades of students admitted, and a lack of funding to improve its lot. Compounding these conditions, facilities are inadequate and degenerating, making it hard for the university to compete for high-quality faculty or high achieving students who have better alternatives available.

As you can see in the case of University D, there is great complexity, but the refraction effect of this complexity is negative, eroding the stability of the network instead of strengthening it. When one element in University D's network refracts onto another, rather than bouncing off each other and amplifying the effect, they instead cancel each other out. For example, the university's attempts to seek prestige by hiring top quality researchers has eroded the value that staff had previously placed on teaching, and consequently, one of University D's greatest assets, its personalised approach with students, has been attenuated. As Brewer et al. (2002/2017) describe it, "the university's strategy of prestige-seeking through growth is incompatible with its circumstances. Growth threatens to destroy the very qualities of the university that it seems to prize," (p. 111).

Ivy League vs IVU

IVU's situation is slightly different again. When IVU's Home Campus was first invited to build a campus in Ho Chi Minh City, it was to be the first of its kind in Vietnam — a fully foreign-owned university, not partnered with a local university, run by foreigners, and above all, *Western*. This was to be its greatest drawcard in a cultural environment that considers Western consumer products superior, or at least of superior interest (Aleti, Brennan, & Parker, 2015; Parker, Aleti Watne, Brennan, Trong, & Nguyen, 2014). Combine this desire for Western goods with a growing middle class with increasing purchasing power, and IVU was ripe for success: "The newly arising middle class in Vietnam is both large and relatively wealthy....[and] often aspire to the products and services that endow them with social status, prestige and an appearance of 'taste'," (Parker et al., 2014, p. 134).

Thus, when IVU was initially launched in Ho Chi Minh City, it was indeed seen by the Vietnamese community as prestigious. However, this was not because the institution itself had built a prestige network, but because Western-ness had prestige in Vietnam at that time, and the Western prestige network — arguably one of the most robust prestige networks in the world — was refracting prestige onto IVU. This is how, although there are very few similarities in appearance or philosophy between Harvard and IVU, Vietnamese external observers could label IVU, "The Harvard of Vietnam". If all Western universities are prestigious, and IVU is a Western university, then IVU must,

therefore, be prestigious and can be likened to the most prestigious university — Harvard.

However, over the ensuing ten years in the market, IVU's reputation began to develop on its own merits, rather than simply being associated with Western prestige. This again led to a more complex and contested refraction effect. When I was observing classes during fieldwork, I saw many instances of students disparaging the reputation that IVU had within the broader Vietnamese community. They said things like, "My friends outside IVU think I'm buying my degree,"; "IVU is just here to make money. That's why our fees are so high," and; "Everyone thinks IVU is the place you go if your grades aren't high enough to get you into a good Vietnamese university." While the students themselves did not necessarily believe this to be the case (although sometimes they appeared to), it was clear that IVU's borrowed prestige network was beginning to erode in the light of increasing negativity, and the university found it necessary to start investing in prestige-seeking behaviours more aggressively.

When I was there in 2016, IVU's prestige-seeking tactics were a constant source of anxiety across the university, albeit for a range of sometimes opposing reasons. The academic staff were concerned that the focus on prestige-seeking was taking away from the university's academic mandate, and that the values of knowledge pursuit and intellectual virtue were being lost. The professional staff, on the other hand, were concerned that the prestige-seeking wasn't working well enough, that they weren't doing enough of it, and that it wouldn't be enough to help pull the university out of the financial calamity that had catalysed the major Restructure of 2014.

The interaction between producing marketable authenticity and seeking prestige

As the previous section indicated, IVU had been experiencing financial difficulties for some time by the time I arrived in 2016. When Elizabeth Goffman, IVU's president, had joined the university in 2013, it had been to the discovery of declining student numbers, increasing staffing costs, and an increasingly competitive Vietnamese higher education landscape.

One of the university executives (who wished to have no identifying descriptors) described it to me as such:

Jodie: So, if you had to capture the goal that the President's Executive set for yourselves in that — perhaps in that first twelve months after the new president arrived — in a short sentence or a couple of sentences, what would that be?

IVU Exec: I would say it would have been to [*pause*] 'rescue' is too strong a word, but essentially to, well, to make the changes that were necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

Jodie: Okay. Do you think the staff were aware of --?

IVU Exec: No, not at all.

Jodie: [*rhetorically — tone of disbelief*] How is that possible?

IVU Exec: Not at all. The Board wasn't even aware.

Jodie: Hmm.

IVU Exec: So, no, staff weren't aware, the Board wasn't aware, [the Home Campus] definitely wasn't aware. I think perhaps you've heard about the O.M.G diagram? [*Jodie shakes head no*]. Well it was a classic diagram that [large international consulting firm] prepared for us, and it showed student numbers doing this [*gestures downwards on a diagonal*], and staff costs doing that [*gestures upwards on a diagonal*].

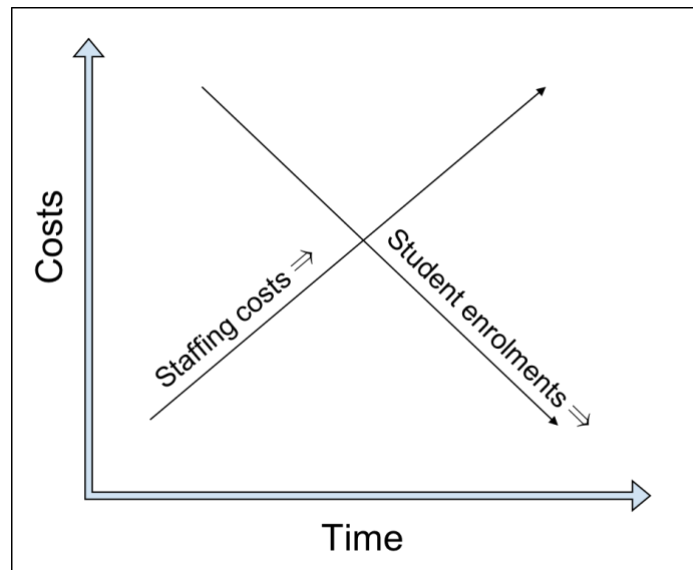


Figure 4: My depiction of the O.M.G Diagram as it was described to me by the IVU Executive

Jodie: [laughing] Oh, I haven't heard it referred to as the O.M.G diagram before — I like that.

IVU Exec: Yeah, it was really more like a W.T.F diagram. But that was essentially that, you know, it was all there, in one diagram.

Jodie: Yeah.

IVU Exec: And then it was like, 'Houston, we've got a problem'²¹.

Jodie: Yeah. So, what process did you then go about in order to educate all the stakeholders that needed to know about that?

IVU Exec: There were town halls, but it wasn't well received. At the same time as that was happening, we also discovered that we weren't compliant with Vietnam — with the number of PhD holders the university was supposed to have. So, not only was there a financial imperative, a student number imperative, there was also a staffing imperative regarding qualifications. So, there were multiple issues coexisting at the same time.

Anonymous IVU Senior Executive

One of the Marketing managers, Marie, told a similar story:

Marie: Well, I think, you know, we were on a massive decline. So, I think that the

²¹ "Houston, we've had a problem" is what one of the astronauts is reported to have said on discovery of the explosion that crippled their spaceship during the Apollo 13 mission. It was popularised in the 1995 film 'Apollo 13' and has come to be used as a hyperbolic metaphor for when something unexpected has gone wrong.

biggest thing for us in Marketing has been stopping the decline of student numbers. Yeah. I mean in all honesty, if the decline hadn't stopped, the university would be closed next year. We were on a really major decline of student numbers that had been going on for years.

Jodie: Wow.

Marie: That, without people really understanding it – there was very little transparency in reporting data. People – I don't think people understood it. So, you know, that's a sales thing, like, you know, I'm used to it being very clear; what are the – what are our numbers, what are the numbers this week? I know the numbers every *day*. *Everyone* knows the numbers every day. When I first came in, when I spoke to student recruitment, they would never – they didn't even know the numbers. And when I spoke to [one of the senior executives] about why they didn't even know the numbers from the enrolment report, he said that they didn't want people to feel, sort of, sad. Or *dejected*.

Jodie: Wow.

Marie: Yeah. So, the – they were just living – it was really – I remember those first few months, you know, I remember just going to [another senior executive] and saying, 'This is really bad.'

Jodie: Wow.

Marie: And like, even looking at targets. I was saying [to the executive], 'Do you understand these targets?' And I mean, he didn't either, like, he was like, '*What??*' Some of them were double – they were projecting numbers that were *double* the year before's enrolments, even though they had been on a really major decline. So, there was – there was definitely a lack of really understanding the process.

Marie — Marketing Manager,

Around the same time that President Goffman came on board at IVU, the Vietnamese government released Decree 73, under which all the universities in Vietnam were to be categorised into one of three tiers. According to an article in the University World News (H. Pham, 2015), Tier 1 would include only the most prestigious universities, based on research outputs, number of PhD holders in the faculty, the ratio of undergraduate to graduate courses and the ratio of full time to part time academics. Tier 2 would be lower ranked universities that had an applied focus, and Tier 3 would be vocational

institutions. “We’ll be fucked if we don’t get Tier 1 status,” academic Sam told me. “Who’s gonna pay ten times as much [compared to Vietnamese universities] if it’s not even considered an elite university?”

In this section, we will explore in greater detail the question of *why* IVU focused so intently on the production of marketable authenticity, despite the concerns of academics.

What would motivate IVU to produce marketable authenticity?

As mentioned in the previous section, the production of marketable authenticity is something that IVU can control, as it can be generated from within (as opposed to prestige which must be conferred from an external source). They can attempt to manage their academic staff ratio so that there are as many white faces on display at the campus at all times — as I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, whiteness has come to represent Western-ness at IVU (and some would argue, in Vietnam). They can keep the grounds, with their colourful tropical gardens, carefully manicured, and keep the facilities looking modern, shiny and high-tech. They can offer President Goffman or one of the other white Heads of Centres to TV news programs and the ever-popular Vietnamese talk shows as “thought-leaders”²² to comment on higher education issues in Vietnam — in English, with translation. They can send academics out to high schools or career fairs in the provinces of Vietnam (preferably the white academics, though not always — if the academic is *fun* or entertaining, this can trump their skin colour). They can enter their current students in every possible university-level competition that involves being able to speak English and present Western ideas, and provide expert coaching to help them win (which they do, more often than not). In short, they can maximise every opportunity to display IVU’s “UVP” — their Unique Value Proposition²³ — to the broader community. However, they must do this with subtlety, to convey the authenticity of the display, via what Jan Nespore (1994) might call “the organisation of everyday activity as a *public* spectacle,” (p. 119). In response to these productions of

²² Thought leaders was a commonly used buzzword at IVU, used more often to refer to how staff should be viewed than to the kind of graduates the university was trying to create.

²³ UVP or Unique Value Proposition is the explicit benefit that a customer will get by engaging with your product – see more here: <https://www.jillkonrath.com/sales-blog/bid/153624/Elevator-Speech-vs-Unique-Selling-Proposition-vs-Value-Proposition>

authenticity, IVU hopes to garner a favourable response from the community; that the broader Vietnamese public will confer prestige upon the university, this time based on its own merits (of Western-ness), rather than only because of its association with Western elitism more broadly.

But why would IVU want all this prestige?

The answer to this is two-fold: firstly, because they needed to grow. At IVU, growth basically meant increasing student enrolments, the key source of revenue for the university. In addition to increasing marketing to improve IVU's reputation and "top-of-mind"²⁴ value within existing markets, one of the ways that IVU seeks to grow was through the introduction of new programs. IVU's Home Campus has a strong reputation for design, architecture and other technology-based subjects, while IVU in Vietnam has always been thought of as a business school. By expanding out to programs in Engineering, Design, and even a planned future Pharmacy program, the campus hoped to expand into new markets, without "cannibalising" their existing possible student enrolment base.

To a lesser extent, growth at IVU could also mean increasing their incoming grant funding, increasing the near-non-existent philanthropic giving from alumni or other sources, or grow (from scratch) a consulting arm of the university in which the academics could be charged out to clients to give expert advice to industry. All of these ideas were being floated while I was on fieldwork. In the "prestige" private universities in the US, these are the most critical source of funds. It has been difficult for IVU to attract alumni donations, however, given the very high tuition fees that students pay to attend the university. According to Meer and Rosen (2012), students who take out student loans are significantly less likely to donate once they are alumni, due to the psychological parity they have achieved with their university — they paid for a good (that being their education) and received that good, so now they are all square. Paying off loans may also create an "annoyance effect" (Meer & Rosen, 2012, p. 898), in which loan recipients resent the fact that they are paying off their education while others

24 Top-of-Mind Awareness in studies of consumer behaviour can be defined as "the first brand that came to mind when the respondents (the subjects of the study) thought about various product categories." (Hakala, Svensson, & Vincze, 2012, p. 442)

received scholarships, leading to a feeling of resentment that reduces their likelihood of donating.

Although there is little evidence to suggest that students at IVU take out personal student loans to pay their tuition fees, the Student Recruitment staff did talk to me about how middle-class families save throughout their children's lives or take out loans as a family, to pay for a Western education. Some extended families, they told me, even choose just one child who holds the most promise of success and pool the resources of the entire extended family to send this one student to IVU. Thus, although the pressure to repay a *monetary* loan may not be there for most individual students, many still do feel that they owe a debt to their families for getting them there. This feeling tends to manifest on campus with students who are unhappy with their grades requesting that their lecturers bump up their marks. Although this was a concern raised regularly by the lecturers, I also observed it myself on one occasion, when a student let me sit in on a consult with the academic I was shadowing that day. The student, who had already formally had his assignment remarked with no change to his results, begged his lecturer to move his grade from a 68 (a Credit grade) to a 70 (a Distinction grade) because "my family are going to be so disappointed in me; they've paid so, so, so much to send me here, all their savings! All their hopes for the future of our family are linked to me. If I don't get a Distinction average, I can't do Honours, I won't get into a Masters, I'll never make a high salary, and all their hard work will have been for nothing. Please! It's only two marks!" The academic declined, citing the need to follow protocol.

Thus, in addition to the need to grow, IVU also needs to seek prestige because they need to provide justification for why their tuition fees are so high. This is especially so as the high tuition fees do not, as may be the case in some Vietnamese universities (according to my participants), give any guarantee that the student will pass or receive high grades. If the value of the tuition is not therefore high grades, then it is critical that IVU demonstrates not only to prospective students and parents but also to the current students and parents, what that value is. This means providing evidence of the university's authentically Western academic offering via all the measures outlined above — white (often male) academics, showy facilities, and a public image that

students and parents can use to endow themselves with “social status, prestige and an appearance of ‘taste’,” (Parker et al., 2014, p. 138).

In summary, the answer to why IVU would want all this prestige is really the wrong question, because it is not really so much about want. It’s about need. They must produce marketable authenticity in order to convince the public to confer prestige upon them. They must be seen as prestigious in order to convey their value to current and prospective students and their parents. A part of being seen as prestigious is projecting an image of wealth and prosperity by visibly demonstrating growth. However, both growth and prestige-seeking behaviours cost the university a lot of money.

But why are their running costs so much higher than their competitors in Vietnam?

IVU is the most expensive university in Vietnam — according to one news report²⁵, the university charges ten times that of its nearest local competitor. The cost of operating a university in Vietnam should theoretically be significantly lower than in Western countries, given the much lower cost of living (in 2016, the year of my fieldwork, Vietnam’s cost of living was calculated to be approximately 100% lower than the cost of living in the US — World Data, 2016). There were three main reasons that I could ascertain for the high running costs at IVU: salaries, the cost of facilities, and ethical business practices. Let’s go through each in turn.

High Salaries

According to World Data (2016), the average monthly income, after tax, for a Vietnamese person in Vietnam was \$181USD in 2016. Vietnamese academic salaries are barely any higher, with one news article declaring that doctorate-level researchers who are willing to take on multiple jobs (one full-time and several part-time) at different universities could earn close to \$400USD per month. In comparison, the lowest paid (meaning Masters-qualified) full-time Vietnamese academic at IVU earns approximately \$40,000USD per annum, which after tax makes for an approximate monthly income of between \$2500 and \$3000USD — more than six times what the most qualified academics earn across multiple academic jobs in Vietnamese universities.

²⁵ I haven’t cited the news report because this would give away the university’s identity. The article was written in 2018.

On the other hand, the Vietnamese academics at IVU are still paid significantly less than their foreign colleagues. Table 1 shows the salary breakdown of IVU’s academic staff:

Foreign (non-Vietnamese) employees		Local (Vietnamese) employees	
USD	VND	USD	VND
\$52,000 to \$62,000	1,184,092,000 đ to 1,184,092,000 đ	\$40,707 to \$49,323	926,944,000 đ to 1,123,144,000 đ
\$64,000 to \$74,000	1,457,344,000 đ to 1,457,344,000 đ	\$51,607 to \$60,171	1,175,144,000 đ to 1,370,144,000 đ
\$80,000 to \$92,500	1,821,680,000 đ to 1,821,680,000 đ	\$64,167 to \$75,585	1,461,144,000 đ to 1,721,144,000 đ
\$101,500 to \$110,500	2,311,256,500 đ to 2,311,256,500 đ	\$81,294 to \$88,716	1,851,144,000 đ to 2,020,144,000 đ
\$148,500	3,381,493,500 đ	\$117,832	2,683,144,000 đ
Foreign employees, TFR includes base salary and any salary packaging options that the employee wishes to pursue, for tax purposes (school fees/airfare)		For Vietnamese employees, TFR includes: annual base salary, annual meal allowance, annual clothing allowance, 22% National Insurance contribution, 13th month salary	

Table 1: Reproduction of salary breakdowns for academics at IVU

This table was provided to me by one of the Vietnamese academics, who noted that publishing the Vietnamese salaries in Vietnam Dong and the foreign salaries in USD conveniently obfuscated the salary discrepancy. I have therefore reproduced it here with the USD equivalents, with that person’s permission. It was not available on the university intranet but has apparently been circulated widely amongst the staff. It may not, therefore, be an official or accurate document, or may be out of date. At the very least, however, it does provide an indication of the enormous difference between academic salaries at IVU compared to Vietnamese universities.

The salary discrepancy between foreign and local academics at IVU — a legacy that had been in place since the campus’s inception — was a sore point for most people.

President Goffman and her executive team often spoke, publicly and to me privately, about the work they were doing to try to bring the salaries into equivalence. However, this had proved difficult and remained a source of tension by the time I left.

Consider this excerpt from an interview with Vietnamese academic, Nhieu, who had lived and studied abroad:

Nhieu: I mean from a perspective of a local, I do believe this is a racist policy that you get paid differently on the basis of your nationality because if we do the same job it's only fair we get paid the same amount. If we have the same qualifications, if we – it's worse than women getting paid less than men...So, that also fits back to what I observed [earlier in the interview] as the perceived importance of the foreign staff. I think in the back of a lot of [Vietnamese] people's heads they do think that probably the foreign staff deserves a bit more money.

Jodie: [surprised] They *deserve* more money?

Nhieu: Just because of the fact that they are foreign people coming into this country and that they – I think so. I might be wrong.

Jodie: Why do they deserve more money?

Nhieu: I might be wrong, but I think that they do believe that. They do believe that expats require better quality services, better quality accommodation. This is the notion that, yeah, well, Vietnamese can sort of put up with more chaos and messiness and foreigners can't and so, therefore, they have to pay more to sort of, have a bit more order in their lives. And I think they buy into that notion and so they sort of sympathise with that to a certain extent while simultaneously thinking that it's an unfair policy. It's very tricky. I, yeah, but also in a very condescending way I think some of them also think that if our — this is going to sound horrible, but — if our non-Vietnamese colleagues are going to be, sort of, used to a large extent, their image, the idea of them, they are going to be used in their capacity to sell this product to students then it's probably fair to pay them more in keeping with that idea that we need to have certain faces in the program to validate the program, to validate the products.

Nhieu — Lecturer, Vietnamese, early-30s, female

The cost of staffing, according to the executives, was one of, if not the most significant expense at IVU. Yet they could not reduce the expense per person, because while salaries were considered high by Vietnamese standards, they were considered quite low by international standards. If IVU wished to attract academics from other countries and meet their quota of 80:20 foreign to Vietnamese scholars, then they needed to keep or raise foreigner salaries. Further, according to Nhieu and many of my other informants, whiteness and foreignness (in some ways synonymous notions) were highly valued commodities at IVU (see Chapter 3 for more detail on this) and salaries needed to reflect that value. However, the executive team agreed with the majority of staff, both Vietnamese and foreign, that the salary discrepancy was unfair and should be removed by raising Vietnamese staff's salaries to be on par. Thus, with individual academic salaries remaining the same or increasing, the cost of staffing could only be reduced by streamlining departments, which had thus catalysed the massive Restructure of 2014 (see Chapter 6 for an analysis of this).

Expensive Facilities

The second significant running cost at IVU was the facilities. As well as being large, modern, and architecturally-designed by a series of big-name foreign architects²⁶, the buildings also cost a lot to maintain, given that they were fully air-conditioned and boasted such high numbers of electronic devices. They were, however, a sunk cost, and like the cost of staffing, the university had struggled to reduce their overheads in this area. While I was on fieldwork, the Finance department announced that they would be moving the university to a cost accounting model, and would be "cutting costs" by ceasing to use existing resources. The academics were outraged at this, feeling (in addition to it being unfair and untenable) that this was illogical. I eventually tracked the logic behind this decision down by interviewing a member of the university's Finance Department. In this interview, conducted in a meeting room in IVU's main administration building, Linh, who had worked in the university's Finance Department for many years, told me that it was, in fact, more about triggering human behaviour than it was about saving money. The spaces around the university were being used inefficiently, and so the Director of Finance had decided to "punish" departments (she told me matter-of-factly) by charging them not only for the percentage of space that

²⁶ The most recent academic building to be constructed on campus apparently cost IVU \$20 million USD.

they did book and use but also charging them an equivalent amount for the corresponding amount of unused space remaining around the university. This had prompted all academic departments to try to shrink the amount of space that they did use, leaving even more space empty than before. Linh told me that it was a simple equation, and it had already saved the university some money because fewer resources – electricity, cleaning costs etc. – were being consumed at any given time. But more importantly, departments were making decisions more “rationally”, which was good training for the future, and were influencing each other to use resources more efficiently, creating a “domino effect”:

The Finance Department triggers change that no one even realises and this is the art of the finance, right? Sit in the corner, play with numbers, but you trigger change. Tell me, are we assholes, are we arrogant? No! For whose benefit? For this university, for themselves (the academics). Because now education and academic people, basically, they are not commercial, so they never think about that (saving money). For them, [receiving a large] budget is the key. Okay, if you pay attention to budget, but you don't pay attention to efficiency, you want all the luxury things, fine. We'll attack your budget by charging you more. Now, we trigger their reaction, their behaviour change.

Linh — Finance Manager , Vietnamese, mid-40s, female

I asked Linh whether she felt the Finance reforms had been effective; if she was aware of any negative consequences; and if she thought the reforms had any correlation to the reportedly high staff turnover:

Increase in staff turnover? No, not at all. At a different time, I heard about that one, but it could be just one of the program managers, or lecturers, saying 'I am senior lecturer, I want to have a private office.' It's not yet extreme that people say, 'If you don't give me a room, I quit.' I didn't hear that. But of course, it contributes to a kind of satisfaction level of the people to work. On the one hand, I understand that, okay. On the other, again, we have reality and standardisation...

...They argue for 'quality' — 'I am academic, you are finance, you have no clue about that. In order to run the course, we have to...' – and all that. Okay. Finance tries to listen, try to understand all that. But also try to give them reality, for how long we will still be able to operate that way. If you eat up our profit margin, no more reserve, competitor come, they will take you out.

The arguments academics made for quality of education, student experience or job satisfaction were received by the Finance Department with some sympathy, but as Linh pointed out, “reality” is dictated by the numbers. The Finance Department were not “assholes” or “arrogant”, they were simply, in their minds, reporting the reality and “helping” the academics be better prepared for that reality. Ultimately, given that the high expense of creating the facilities was already sunk, the university administrators felt that the only way to mitigate this cost was to make the use of the facilities more efficient. In this way, at least they would not waste IVU's limited available funding on unnecessary items, like air conditioning or lighting in areas that were not being maximally utilised. And as Linh suggested, if IVU spent its reserves on unnecessary things, they would have no buffer to get them through a difficult spot like the one they had hit in 2013/2014. In an increasingly competitive Vietnamese higher education landscape, this was simply not seen as a tenable option.

Paying full price... for everything

The third contributing factor to IVU's high running costs was a strict adherence to Western norms of ethical business dealings — in other words, the university had a policy against paying the bribes on which much of the country relied. According to a 2013 survey, 69% of firms in Vietnam, both local and foreign, reported experiencing petty corruption:

The definition of petty corruption used in the survey included firms forced to pay small bribes to end harassment by officials or to smooth the work of civil servants. Forms of harassment by public officials included intentionally prolonging the completion of tasks (reported by 63 per cent of correspondents), no explanation of the procedures to follow (58 per cent) and deliberately creating irrelevant requirements (48 per cent). (Thu, 2013, <https://www.vir.com.vn/petty-corruption-is-common-say-firms-24011.html>)

Various professional staff at IVU told me that IVU experienced the same kind of petty harassment whenever they tried to build anything new or interact with the government or other bureaucratic agencies, but that they never paid the bribes. In fact, one of the more commonly told origin stories in circulation about the university was about this absolute refusal to engage in corrupt practices. Apparently, when the land for the university was chosen in a location on one side of an enormous multilane highway, it

was with the understanding that an underpass would be built from a spot just before IVU to the other side of the highway. In this way, staff, students and taxis would not have to traverse the length of the highway in one direction before being able to turn around to head back towards the city centre; the direction in which most people lived. However, when it came to be built, the construction company asked for the standard bribe, and IVU refused to pay, citing their Home Campus's anti-corruption rules. Unfortunately, the contractors had an agreement with the government by this point that the underpass would be built. So instead of reneging on the deal entirely, they just moved the location of the underpass 200 metres up the road, making it significantly more inconvenient and expensive for staff and students of IVU to get home of an evening.

Several members of IVU's facilities team, so it was rumoured, had been fired over the last 10 years for failing to adhere to this rule, although this was not always through straight bribery. One had been fired for providing "gifts" to a contractor's family in exchange for a substantial discount on a project. Another, who had employed a family member as a contractor on a project at a significant saving to the university, was heavily sanctioned for breaching the conflict of interest clause in the IVU Code of Conduct. Although it often disadvantaged IVU financially, I was told that the scandal that would erupt if IVU, a university under constant government and media scrutiny, was found to be corrupt in *any* way, would undoubtedly erode market trust in the brand entirely, and would clearly not be worth it.

The Marketable Authenticity Cycle

To summarise this second section of Chapter 2, let me first provide you with a diagram:

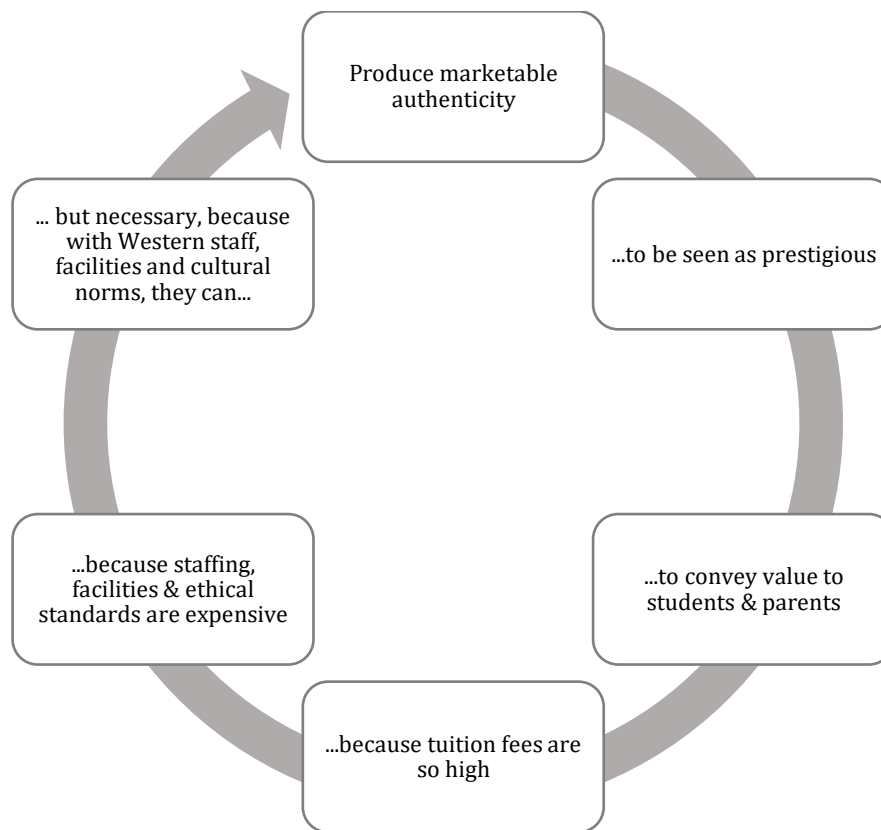


Figure 5: The Marketable Authenticity Cycle

As you can see from Figure 5, IVU must produce marketable authenticity in order to convince the public to confer prestige upon them. They must be regarded as prestigious in order to convey their value to current and prospective students and their parents. They must make their value explicit because tuition fees, the universities principal source of revenue, are so high. The fees are so high because staffing, facilities and ethical standards are all expensive to attain and maintain. But they need to have expensive staff, facilities and ethical standards because these are all critical elements for producing marketable authenticity. And they need to produce marketable authenticity in order to be seen as prestigious. And so, the cycle continues.

Graduation: Constructing a knot in the prestige-seeking action net

Now, let us turn to a case study to illustrate how marketable authenticity is generated, and prestige is sought at IVU. Graduation ceremonies, held once a year in November, were a critical site for the production of IVU's marketable authenticity. They brought together the graduating students looking their best and projecting utmost

confidence and success; the academics in their most prestigious clothes — graduation gowns — and on display for parents and other outsiders to marvel at and photograph; and the university's facilities, groomed so that every surface shone in the guaranteed November sunshine. As one young academic laughingly described it, "Grad is prestige promo central...it has fed my aspirations to remain in academia though." By exploring what went right and wrong for IVU at the 2016 graduation ceremonies, I will attempt to unpack both the essence and the value of prestige in this university context.

Pre-ceremony Jitters

There were four graduation ceremonies held over two days, and I attended one on each of the days, the first as an exercise in general observation, the second while shadowing a specific academic, Molly. Molly, an older, British academic who you met preparing for her classes in Chapter 1, was quite excited to be attending graduation as it was her first at IVU and she was looking forward to celebrating her students' achievements. We met at IVU's cavernous Sports and Recreation Centre (fondly referred to by staff and students as the Sports Hall) around 8:30 am. Between 8:30 and 9:20 was the allocated time for the academics to be "robed" by the designated "Academic Dressers" — staff and student volunteers who had been trained to help with the dress requirements. Much like the business students in Jan Nessor's (1994) ethnography of a physics department and a management department in a US university, the academics' bodies and bodily practices were to be subjected to "conscious and strategic construction" (p. 121) to recast them into graduation-appropriate configurations. Two of the air-conditioned dance studios had been converted (according to a printed and laminated sign stuck to the door) into "Academic Dressing Rooms". The air-conditioning was critical, as by 8:30am it was already sweltering. Most of the academics walked in dripping with sweat, hair plastered to their foreheads from the heat of their motorbike helmets.

Molly had brought her own academic dress with her — an especially lovely set of heavy doctoral robes with velvet trimming. As one of the dressers helped her put it on, pulling and tugging to get everything into place, I chatted to one of the academic managers who had noticed my presence. "Oh, it's so great you're here!" she told me

enthusiastically. “I’m so glad you’re capturing this! I mean, this is what we’re here for isn’t it? This is the big pay off.”

At 9:20 am, the staff were ushered to a part of the dressing room that had been set up with seating for the 50 to 60 academics assembled. Thomas, a senior manager in the Communications and Events department, gave a humorous briefing on the order of the ceremony and how to behave, which was warmly received by the academic audience. There was a similar feeling to backstage at a high school musical – laughter, a few stressed faces, concentrating intently on the task ahead, nodding along to each of Thomas’s instructions. People were fiddling with each other’s robes. It was a fun energy.

The briefing ended, and the academics were shepherded into the appropriate order in which to “proceed”, ready to “be dignified” as Thomas has requested.

From the moment the academics arrived on campus for graduation, I argue, they were being groomed for prestige-seeking. Leaving nothing to chance, the Events team had ensured that every academic who would be representing IVU in the Academic Procession would have time to cool off so as not to present parents in the audience with “a bunch of sweaty white people,” as I overheard one academic describe the assembled mob during the hour-long dressing period. The dressers were carefully trained to ensure that the array of different academic robes, both those provided by the university and those brought with the academics from wherever they completed their doctoral degrees, were worn correctly, and pinned in place so as not to slip down or move around and distract the audience from the splendour of the ceremony. The staff were briefed on how to “be dignified” — the pace at which to walk on the way in (“think regal — slow, but not so slow that the person behind will bump into you!”) and on the way out (“there’ll be music playing! It’s upbeat, it’s fun, you can dance and clap, make the students feel like you’re celebrating their success and that they can have fun when they are proceeding out too!”). They were instructed on the appropriate facial expressions (sombre going in, excited going out). Even when to stand, sit, clap, not clap, congratulate students, sit quietly, etc., etc., etc. They were lined up in a hierarchical order, with the “Mace Bearer” — a member of the senior executive, holding the university’s “mace” [See Figure 6] leading the procession for maximum impact. As the procession entered the

hall, already filled with the graduands and their parents, an audible murmur of excitement rose up over the resonant notes of “Pomp and Circumstance” playing through the loudspeakers.



Figure 6: The “Mace Bearer” leading IVU’s academic procession

As I took my place in one of the mezzanine-level seats — furthest from the action but with the best view of the entire affair — the remains of the Academic Procession filed onto the stage and arranged themselves in order of hierarchy, with the most majestically-robed university officials on maximum display in the front row. The Sports Hall was resplendent but modern: geometric shapes and boldly-coloured banners lined the periphery to disguise the sound-muffling material on the gym walls. Red carpets had been laid out to cover the rubber flooring. The temporary stage and its backdrop did not

entirely cover the bleachers that had been retracted to sit behind them. The Sports Hall looked like an expensively-decorated but makeshift option for such a grand occasion and the Events team had said as much to me themselves, but “it’s the largest venue available in HCMC to be booked out for two days straight every November. Besides,” one told me, “it gives the parents an opportunity to see the grounds and understand what they were paying for all these years”. Thus, holding the ceremony in the Sports Hall fulfils dual purposes — to provide an appropriately-sized space for the ceremony, and to allow parents to imagine the lives that their offspring had been leading over the previous two years.

The Events team, in collaboration with Student Services, Facilities, Finance and IT, had been planning the Graduation Ceremonies for months, and so far, everything had gone off without a hitch. IVU’s President Goffman rose to speak, beginning with a halting greeting in Vietnamese that received enthusiastic applause from the obviously forgiving audience. Switching back to English, she asked the students to thank their supporters — their family, friends, and the large number of IVU staff, both professional and academic, who had “dedicated themselves to the students’ success and well-being over the course of your degrees”. As the President gave her animated speech, her face was projected up onto two huge screens on either side of the stage, while Vietnamese subtitles scrolled across beneath her chin²⁷. Although she sounded natural as if her jokes were “off the cuff”, her speech must have been pre-written as the Vietnamese translations were occurring in real time, and the Vietnamese-speaking audience were laughing almost in sync with the English-speakers. It was a highly polished performance. The Vietnamese parents sitting around me murmured their appreciation to each other, a constant background hum of quiet Vietnamese as they commented on her shoes, her voice, her lovely skin, how hot it was (the air-conditioning did extend to the hall, but it wasn’t very effective), and what they were going to do after the ceremony²⁸.

27 Clearly it was more important for parents to understand what was being said at graduation than it was at enrolment, where the English-only foyer signage nodded to Western academic prestige via a different route.

28 I have been taking Vietnamese lessons on and off since 2009, and more intensively during my fieldwork. Although my Vietnamese language skills are not great and I didn’t officially need them to do observations at IVU, I was able to understand most of what I overheard in casual conversations during my fieldwork.

Following the speeches, the degree conferral began. The previous day, I had arrived early to observe the set-up of the hall prior to the ceremony's commencement and had joined some of the Student Services staff as they discussed a new automated system for introducing the graduands to the stage. In the past, the Vice Chancellor or one of the other Home Campus officials would announce the degree²⁹, and then a Vietnamese member of staff would read out the student names, as they were too difficult for the foreigners to pronounce. Unfortunately, this sometimes resulted in mismatches, when a student didn't show up to graduate but was still on the list, primarily because Vietnamese names are so similar or sometimes even identical — I counted three “Nguyen Thi Thuys” and four “Nguyen Thi Anh Thuys” in one cohort, for example. Also, often international students' names were mispronounced by the Vietnamese name reader. So the Student Services Development Team had built a new system – each student was given a card with a barcode. As they got to the stage, their card would be scanned, causing a pre-recorded voice (a Vietnamese native-speaker for the Vietnamese names, an English native speaker for international students, regardless of nationality) to read out that student's name. Then, while the student walked across the stage, the video of them walking would be labelled with their name, so that the audience would know who they were currently watching. The Student Services staff were tentatively optimistic that these new technologies would change the feel of the ceremony. It used to be difficult for most parents to follow along, they said, because the sound in the Sports Hall was so echoey, and the reading out of students' names was always very long and tedious. However, they were hopeful that the new system would make it all much quicker and with fewer fumbles.

Everything ran smoothly until the first round of degree conferrals had finished, and a student was invited onto the stage to sing (and give the audience a break from listening to lists of names). Although her vocals were excellent, the sound was literally painful — far too loud and amplified further by the terrible acoustics that caused echoes to assault the audience from all directions. The parents near me were hunching over in their seats holding their ears — so was I. Towards the end of the song, there was an ear-splitting bang, as if a microphone had been thrown to the ground, and both the backing

²⁹ Apparently there were politics around this, although no one could tell me what they were exactly. But the year I was there, the IVU Heads of Centres did this part, not the Home Campus officials.

music and the singer's microphone abruptly stopped working. Several audience members screamed, and a shocked murmur ran over the crowd. The video screens remained on for a few moments, capturing the singer's dismay, the panic on the faces of the Student Services staff, on hand in case anything went wrong with their new system, and the wide-eyed bemusement of the academic officials on the stage. Then just as abruptly, the power to the entire Sports Hall went out, taking the video feed with it.

For a moment, everyone sat in stunned silence. Then, the Head of Student Services, an ordinarily shy Kiwi man, made his sheepish way onto the now darkened stage and, projecting his deep voice to be heard throughout the hall, said, "So, um, obviously we're having a power outage folks, so, um, if you could just bear with us for a few minutes..." Someone apparently then recalled that most of the audience did not speak English, and a Vietnamese woman came onto the stage and translated the message in a series of shouts, taking breaths between each clause in order to be loud enough. The audience chuckled — the English version of the message had been fairly obvious.

When functioning appropriately, advanced technologies can be an exemplary prestige-seeking device. This was especially so for the technologies used in IVU's graduation ceremony, to demonstrate to parents that their facilities were state-of-the-art compared to those in Vietnamese universities. Prestige is perhaps not typically associated with new technologies, because as discussed previously, prestige is also usually developed over long periods of time, while modern technologies are by their very nature, new — that is to say, they have not in themselves had time to build up networks of prestige. But in developing countries like Vietnam, where consumer culture is obsessed with newness, the display of new and advanced technologies can be associated with social status, and as H.C. Pham (2015) points out in his thesis about consumer culture in Vietnam, this can then be used as a point of distinction to differentiate oneself from others. This was the goal in IVU's case here — the video screens, integrated sound system, swipe cards, real-time subtitles, all were designed to create a sense of streamlined, easy glamour that would make the parents feel, as Market Research Manager Trang pointed out to me once, "very, very, *very* special...like, 'Oh my god. It's for *me*. This is *my* parent's meeting, and it's *my* son's school. I am special, we are *special*.'" At the same time, the smooth operation of these new technologies was also

intended to position IVU as different, more advanced than their Vietnamese competitors.

However, the technologies failed. In *Pandora's Hope*, Bruno Latour (1999) posits that we become painfully aware of the work that non-human objects — as I have been in this section, Latour is describing technologically advanced machines — have been doing to maintain an actor-network only when they fail, and thus cease to do that work. It is a case of “not knowing what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone”, as the saying goes. He defines the act of blackboxing as follows:

An expression from the sociology of science that refers to the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become. (Latour, 1999, p. 304)

Let us then view the graduation ceremony as a network in which marketable authenticity is being produced in pursuit of prestige. When the actants were collaborating effectively, the effect was smooth — parents did not need to think too deeply about the construction of the ceremony, they could just sit back and enjoy the ride. However, when the technologies failed so spectacularly, the work they had been doing to create the image of academic authenticity was thrown into sharp relief. The screens, doing the work of allowing the parents to see their children graduate from “up close” suddenly rendered parents distant from the experience. The non-English speakers, deprived of the subtitles, were excluded from the display. The microphones and loudspeakers, although they had been hampered by the Sports Hall’s terrible acoustics, had nonetheless been doing work to project even the tiniest of voices out to the masses, bringing dignity to the experience that was abruptly taken away as soon as the young Vietnamese staff member had to shout to be heard. With these breakdowns, the “authenticity” that had been being produced lost some of its lustre, because a genuinely prestigious, authentic academic experience would surely be faultless? Thus, with the production of marketable authenticity on the decline, so too did the opportunity to be conferred with prestige by the audience, and this knowledge seemed to me to be visible on the faces of the panicked Student Services staff. With little

alternative, the rest of the degree conferrals were sprinted through at breakneck speed, without sound amplification, video, and with very little light in the hall for parents to even make out their offspring's big moment.

After the storm

After the ceremony when everyone had filed out of the hall and into the slightly fresher air (despite how ineffectual we had all thought the air conditioning was in the first half of the ceremony, the second half without it was much, much hotter) it was time for photos. Photo backgrounds were scattered across IVUs lush grounds, complete with boxes full of funny hats, glasses and other costuming for students to take their own graduation photos. President Goffman and the Vice Chancellor, who was visiting from The Home Campus, stood in the baking heat for hours after the ceremony having their picture taken with every single student and their family. This, I had been told, was always one of the most popular aspects of the ceremony. Molly and I found a shady spot to watch, enjoying the students' exuberance as they raced around taking photos with each other, their families, and the staff.



Figure 7: Heavily branded photography backdrops (with branding covered over to protect the university's real identity).

Just as the clouds came over and we had decided to leave for the post-ceremony reception, a graduate ran up to us with her mother in tow and asked if they could take a picture with Molly, which she smilingly agreed to. After they ran off to ask another staff

member for a photo, I commented to Molly that it must be nice, having her students want those lasting memories of her. Molly looked at me with eyebrows raised, and said, “oh, no that wasn’t one of my students, I’ve never seen those people before in my life! Pretty sure she just wanted photos with the blonde lady in the floppy hat and Harry Potter gown. Apparently, this always happens. I feel like I’m in costume as the White, Western Professor!” Although she was laughing as she said this, it was a wry, uncomfortable laugh. I questioned her about that, and she shrugged, and said that, coupled with the university president’s speech that seemed more about selling IVU than it did about celebrating the achievements of the students or staff, “I just don’t know how I’m supposed to fit in with all of this.”



Figure 8: Molly being photographed by parents of a student she didn't know (faces blacked out to preserve anonymity).

In this moment, I would posit, there was some evidence that IVU’s attempts to manufacture marketable authenticity in pursuit of prestige had paid off. In presenting their lecturers — as Molly pointed out, particularly their white lecturers — in these quintessentially academic costumes, carefully coiffed and coached on how to behave, IVU indeed seemed to have succeeded in attracting prestige from their intended audience. However, in doing so, they had inadvertently highlighted to their academic

staff where their – the academics’ – greatest value lay — in their appearance as legitimate, authentic-looking academics. As I shall explore in Chapter 3, it can be highly uncomfortable for white people to think about their own whiteness as a resource that they have available to them. At IVU, I will argue, whiteness is also a resource that the university feels entitled to exploit in a range of ways.

Conclusion

So, did IVU gain their much-sought-after Tier 1 status? Interestingly, I can’t answer that question. Although in 2018, I contacted various of my informants still working at IVU, as well as made official requests for information from the Marketing and Communications departments, the Research Training department, and one of the former members of the President’s Executive, I have consistently received either no response, or the respondent didn’t know the answer. I contacted the Vietnamese Embassy here in Canberra, seeking a list of Tier 1 universities in Vietnam – nobody knew what I was talking about. Finally, days before I am due to submit this thesis, I sent a last-ditch email CCing everyone I could think of at IVU, asking if anyone knew in what Tier IVU had been categorised. Most who replied did not know, but one reliable source sent me, and the rest of the CC’d list, this reply:

Dear all,

The Tier 1 issue has somehow faded away over the past year in the Vietnam HE community... I do not know why and I do not know either when and whether it will come back.

Best, [Name].

Personal communication via email, Vietnamese non-academic from IVU.

It seems I am destined to never know whether the work IVU put into producing marketable authenticity in pursuit of the prestige of being labelled a Tier 1 university in Vietnam paid off for them. That said, in the concluding chapter, I will provide a broader update on where the university is currently at, and where their efforts have left them in other regards.

In *Chapter 2: Producing Authenticity, Seeking Prestige and Marketing to the Masses*, I've unpacked how the production of marketable authenticity allows IVU to seek prestige. When IVU first opened in Vietnam, I have argued that the university had the prestige associated with Western education in Vietnam refracted onto them. However, over time, this prestige network has been eroded by conflicting and contested views of IVU's performance. To rebuild their positive image, and because prestige is socially constituted, IVU seeks to have prestige conferred upon them by the Vietnamese public in order to justify their high tuition fees. To produce the marketable authenticity required to legitimise their prestige-seeking behaviours, they employ tactics such as building expensive buildings, paying their staff high salaries and maintaining Western ideologies in their business practices. However, these tactics are costly, leading IVU to require revenue growth in order to stay afloat, usually via increased tuition fees. This then leads to a new cycle of needing to seek prestige. There is a palpable fear amongst the executives and professional staff at IVU that their efforts at keeping costs low, while producing marketable authenticity in order to maintain the high tuition fees, will not be enough. The university is not financially stable, and could, they fear, still go under. The academics, on the other hand, fear that prioritising marketable authenticity in pursuit of prestige, even if for the noble purpose of keeping the university afloat, will inevitably lead to the creation of a university that is not worthy of keeping afloat anyway.

Chapter 3: Performing Whiteness

Our students come here because it's a great campus, they get to meet these round-eyed, big-nosed people who are talking to them about the West — because they want to suck it up like a sponge, you saw that in my class — and it is strategically and pedagogically and practically wrong. And it's *[pause]* it's just a brand. It's a marketing strategy, it's not a real strategy.

Carl — lecturer, white, late-50s, Welsh.

Introduction

In this chapter, I wish to explore how the constructs of “whiteness” and “academicness” intersect and are enacted on an IBC, and with what effects³⁰. I will argue that the nature of academic labour is changed by intersections of neoliberalisation and globalisation on an international branch campus, which I contend makes enactments of whiteness *more* valued/valuable than intellect, teaching ability or research prowess. On a global, neoliberalised campus like IVU, putting whiteness on display is one of the quickest and most effective ways to produce marketable authenticity to the Vietnamese market.

On a globalised, market-driven university campus like IVU, these combined forces of neoliberalism and globalisation create two, interplaying effects: a) the need to make money, and b) the need to be *seen* as “global” (in order to make money). As anthropologist Neha Vora (2015) points out, in academia, global-ness is not so much about taking into account the many cultures and ways of being that permeate the globe; it is actually about permeating the globe with the ways of Western education. But, as historian Arnold Toynbee indicated in 1948 when he asked, “is there a Western tradition?” (Toynbee, 1948, p. 151), Westernness is itself nebulous and contested. Where, and more importantly, *who* counts as Western? Are Australia and New Zealand,

30 A reminder from the introduction: I am using the noun “construct” to denote an idea that has become a well-built network through usage by humans and non-humans — so academic-ness, in this example, is a construct that has been brought about collectively by humans invested in what it may mean and non-humans (eg. books, buildings, technologies etc.) that are enrolled in maintaining the notion. The key point of a construct for our purposes in this chapter is that they are separate to the humans or non-humans who embody and enact them. Law (2009) reminds us, however, that a construct does not become “real until it is enacted into being”.

located in the South-Eastern quadrant of the world map, part of “the West”? And if so, do the Indigenous peoples of these nations typically spring to mind as “Westerners” when this title is invoked? Are Eastern Europeans “Westerners”? Are “non-whites” born in countries like Germany or Sweden, “Westerners”? And perhaps most importantly, who gets to decide the answers to these questions?

I argue that often, when people use the term “Western”, they imagine that they can avoid any ideological undertones; as if they are merely referring to someone or something relating to a geographic location — the West — therefore bypassing racial connotations. However, as Bhopal and Donaldson (1998) point out, in both popular usage and clinical/political contexts, “Westerners” are “of or pertaining to the Western or European countries or races, as distinguished from the Eastern or Oriental,” and those races are “characterised by light complexion”. So, in other words, “Westerners” are “white”. To relate this, then, to the two effects of a globalised, market-driven environment on an international branch campus: when an IBC needs to make money and needs to be seen as global, this, in fact, implies that to make money, it needs to be perceived as a “white space”, or a space designed to the preferences of Western norms. The data and argumentation of this chapter will bear this contention out.

Richard Dyer, in his 1997 book *White*, argues that in popular and critical representations of white people, their whiteness is largely ignored – they are “just humans”, “unraced” as it were. The only time when race needs to be pointed out is when it is not about white people, because whiteness is a baseline for normalcy. He also points out that his own queerness created a desire in him to form close relationships with non-white people, in some kind of (what he describes as) misplaced sense of solidarity in otherness. However, the experience of frequently being the only white person in a particular space made him acutely aware of his whiteness in ways that he would never have had to be if he had remained in spaces where whiteness was the norm. It is easy to see how this applies to the white academics at IVU. For many, living in Vietnam is their first experience of not being a member of the race that holds hegemonic dominance. Their own whiteness was being made highly visible to them, sometimes for the first time. For some, and at some points in time, this was a source of fascination; for others, and at other times, it was a source of deep discomfort. Either

way, it was a constant topic of conversation for the white staff of the IVU campus. Interestingly, however, it was just as topical amongst the non-white staff, both Vietnamese and non-white foreigners. I will argue in this chapter that, while Vietnamese-ness may be the dominant hegemonic position within Vietnam, even Vietnamese people feel that whiteness is the dominant “ethnoracial assignment” (Brodkin, 1998) at a global level, and the contestations of these dominant positions created levels of tension on campus that manifested in constant discussion and heightened ethnoracial awareness.

Many authors have argued that whiteness is constructed in relation to, and sometimes opposition to, other races and that it is in no way fixed. The case of Jews in America provides a useful illustration of the way that whiteness can be assigned or denied, based not on appearance but on ideology. According to anthropologist Karen Brodtkin (1998) in *How Jews Became White Folks And What That Says About Race In America*, prior to World War II in the US, Jews along with other Eastern and Southern European immigrants were not considered to be white, either in popular imaginaries, or by those in power. She refers to this as an ethnoracial assignment (as opposed to an ethnoracial identity, which is how a person conceives of their *own* race, although this is within the context of ethnoracial assignments). The decision, if you can call it that, to conceive of Jews as non-white was both raced and classed — only those with pure Nordic heritage could be considered white, and these were predominantly and not coincidentally the wealthier members of the social elite. However, following the ideological extremism demonstrated during WWII, Americans hastened to distance themselves from these purist notions of racial division. At the same time, many of the “off-white” European immigrants (Jews, Italians, Irish etc.) had done well for themselves financially (along with the rest of the American economy following the war), meaning that their children were now members of a respectable middle class with increasing access to college education. Whiteness, argues Brodtkin, was granted to Jews because of their increasing wealth and status within middle-classed professionalism. In turn, their newly acquired whiteness assisted Jews in gaining increasing wealth, education and status — thus money, class and race were heavily intertwined in the changed racial designation of American Jews.

What this means for my argument is that whiteness, as has been claimed by many scholars in critical race studies, can be taken as a construct that can be assigned, designated, deployed and denied to both individuals and groups. I will begin this chapter by demonstrating how these deployments of whiteness are enacted at IVU for the benefit of both ethnoracially assigned white people, and those of other assignments who have managed to accumulate “white capital”. I will then discuss how whiteness is a capitalist commodity that is both marketed and sold by the university to prospective and current students and parents. However, while whiteness is used and accepted as a proxy indicator for academic excellence on an IBC, it has also come to stand in the place of academic excellence at IVU, rendering the enactment of more traditional forms of academic excellence unnecessary. What is necessary is the *appearance* of academic excellence, which is represented by whiteness, in the form of the white faces of the academic staff, the white-coded spaces of the campus, and the appearance of Western thinking embedded in the curriculum, as evidenced in white-coded marketing materials. I will conclude with a discussion of what white privilege can be on an international branch campus, and how it is problematised when the university exploits academics’ whiteness to produce marketable authenticity.

Whiteness as a transferable resource

In his 2017 book *Imitation Nation: Red, White, and Blackface in Early and Antebellum US Literature*, Jason Richards undertakes an analysis of a scene from a novella by Herman Melville called *Benito Cereno*³¹. In the scene, the protagonist comes across a Spanish slave ship whereon he notes some odd behaviour. He has failed to realise that the slaves have mounted a rebellion against the crew and that the captain, Benito Cereno, is being controlled during every exchange with the protagonist by his black manservant Babo, by way of Babo’s dagger held to Cereno’s back throughout the scene.

Richards uses this scene to discuss notions of blackface and whiteface, although not so much in its traditional (and widely acknowledged as highly offensive) usage as white people costuming themselves in black face paint to satirise African or African-American culture. Instead, he uses it to explore the possibility of race as a mask that, because it is

³¹ Benito Cereno is based on the real-world memoir of Captain Amasa Delano, titled “A Narrative of Voyages and Travels”.

only loosely linked to visual appearance, can, in fact, be put on and taken off as needed. In *Benito Cereno*, so Richards contends, the black servant Babo, having seized control of the ship, then dons a metaphorical blackface mask, a costume (and subsequent performance) of the obsequious and devoted slave, in order to deceive the protagonist into believing nothing has changed aboard the ship. However:

Babo also and simultaneously performs a version of *whiteface*... by deploying Cereno's imperial white body as a kind of mask, which allows him to figuratively and temporarily whiten as he enjoys the power and dominance that go hand in hand with white skin... Babo uses Cereno as a surrogate body, through which he occupies, burlesques and menaces colonial authority. (Richards, 2017, p. 135, my emphasis.)

This passage took me by surprise on reading it, because it reminded me of an anecdote relayed to me by one of my participants. Carl, a tall, white, Welsh professor in his late 50s with white hair and piercing blue eyes, was asked by his academic line manager, an African-American professor named Joseph, to fill in for him at an event in Hanoi.

"He asked me to go up to Hanoi to be the "white face" of IVU at this student recruitment expo. It made me quite uncomfortable actually because he was just so upfront about why he was asking *me*, particularly, to go - my white skin, specifically. He didn't explicitly say why it should be me and not *him* [*pause*] but given the way Vietnamese people talk about black people here, I'm guessing he felt that he couldn't just go himself. So yeah, it was a pretty awkward conversation. But, in the end, I was happy to go because it meant a free trip to Hanoi and I'd not been before, so --- [*shrugs*]"

Carl — lecturer, white, late-50s, Welsh.

I am loath to make direct comparisons between Joseph's experience of academia and the slave trade, and Carl by no means had a knife held to his back to force him into representing IVU in the way that Cereno did. However, I am struck by the notion that Carl's embodied whiteness had nonetheless (according to Carl's retelling of the tale, at least) been deployed by Joseph in a similar way. Carl was invited to become a surrogate body through which Joseph (or at least Joseph's role as program manager) could represent the university at the event. Carl was briefed by Joseph on what to say (and what not to say), how to behave, and even how to dress, to ensure that IVU's aims at the event (to recruit new students and, ultimately, receive their tuition fees) were met. One

critical difference between Babo's and Joseph's respective goals in deploying another's whiteness, however, was that Joseph was doing so on behalf of an employer who makes clear on a regular basis, through near-daily discussion, what prospective students and parents wish or expect to see at an event like this — white faces. His response, then, was a pragmatic one that nonetheless allowed him to accumulate and deploy a form of white power by proxy.

The idea that one can accumulate whiteness was also put forth by Australian-Lebanese anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2000) in his ground-breaking text *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, Hage puts forth the idea of "national capital" as being an accumulation of "possessions", of a sort, that "allow the person who owns them to claim certain forms of dominant national belonging" (Hage, 2000, p. 56). Not all of these possessions have equal value, and the value of each possession fluctuates according to contextual and temporal factors. The combinations of possessions owned are also important. Hage gives the example of having blonde hair versus having an Australian accent. Both can be useful in accumulating capital, but having blonde hair combined with a Russian accent will diminish the value of the blonde hair in the Australian context, while having blonde hair plus an Australian accent (even while lacking Australian citizenship, for example) has exponentially higher value and gives the owner of those possessions a greater accumulation of national capital.

As is inferred in Richards' (2017) analysis of *Benito Cereno*, Hage (2000) also claims that whiteness is not only about race or skin colour, although he does point out the value of possessing a pale skin colour for accumulating whiteness in the Australian context. This was similarly evident in my field site. Consider this excerpt from an interview with one of my Vietnamese informants, Nhieu, a female lecturer who possessed both pale skin and excellent English language skills:

Nhieu: It's fascinating how much language competence plays a role in the way your intelligence is perceived. So, I have heard complaints [by students] about staff members not speaking fluent English and that is perceived as lack of competence, which of course is unfair, but that's just part of it. And I do believe that my English plays a role in how students see me — that they would see me as, not as a Vietnamese staff member,

but somewhere in between. I am not really white, but I am not really Asian either. And so, I think when they put me on a spectrum, they put me in that middle point, in sort of a unique position that — and so for that reason, I don't struggle as much as my Vietnamese colleagues do in terms of fighting off the perception that their [academic] competence is associated with their language abilities. And then, yeah, so that is a bit of a sad reflection that I feel quite privileged, that I know that that dynamic exists. *[Laughs]* Yeah, any other questions to help me organise my faults?

Jodie: *[Laughing]* Sure. So, you talked about language competence in English.

Nhieu: Yeah.

Jodie: Not all of the lecturers in your department are native English speakers, including some of the foreign staff.

Nhieu: No.

Jodie: Do you think the same complaints or the same perceptions come from students about the foreign staff who don't speak English as native English speakers?

Nhieu: Not necessarily. So, yeah, I think you've hit a really good point there. So, that's where colour comes in I think. Not all staff are native speakers, but if they're white, I think they have an easier time.

Nhieu — lecturer, Vietnamese, early-30s, female

Nhieu exemplified what Hage is describing in terms of the accumulation of a type of capital. Her pale skin, an atypically masculine fashion sense for a Vietnamese woman that marked her as different (her academic uniform consisted mostly of tailored slacks, collared shirts and polished brogues or oxfords), and her near-fluent use of English all worked together to give her resources that could be used to stave off potential student complaints about her Vietnamese-ness. But what kind of capital is this? It cannot have been national capital in this context, as she was already a Vietnamese person located in Vietnam. Bourdieu (1986) describes linguistic capital as a form of cultural capital, and Nhieu could certainly be said to possess this. Lan (2011) has argued in the Taiwanese context that English-language usage is a form of capital that can have significant value, but that it is only available for conversion into other forms (such as social or economic capital) for those with the *right* English accent, as well as those possessing ethnoracially

assigned white skin. Yet while Nhieu could not be said to possess either of these, she did seem to have a form of linguistic capital. This, too, however, does not encompass the full index of her “possessions” (Hage, 2000).

I would argue that Nhieu had accumulated *white* capital and that this whiteness was linked not only to her skin colour but also to the other things that she did or said that might be associated with the West, and consequently, with whiteness. White capital is not an entirely new concept, although few scholars have used the term explicitly, and when they do, it's often to refer to ways in which white people acquire economic capital, particularly in spaces dominated by non-whites (Benson & Reilly, 2018). Catrin Lundström (2014/2017), however, in her ethnography of non-white migrants who have become citizens in Sweden and of white Swedish migrants living in the US, Spain and Singapore, does provide a useful working definition, based on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital:

The concept of white capital is used here as an embodied (concerning skin colour or hair texture) and institutionalised (concerning visa policies or citizenship rights) form of cultural capital. This type of capital can be converted into other forms of capital across social space (thus distinguishing capital from resources), depending on how they are valued in a particular context (Lundström, 2017, p. 84).

Where Nhieu differs from Lundström's participants is in being both of the dominant ethnic group (*Kinh*), and also native-born to the host country in question — Vietnam, an Asian nation where there is a vast amount of national capital to be accumulated via one's degree of Vietnamese-ness. Yet despite her in-other-ways-obvious Vietnamese-ness (ie. her name, and her fluency in Vietnamese language and cultural norms for example), Nhieu had accumulated white capital via embodied means — her pale skin, pixie-style haircut, masculine dress and English-language competency. Furthermore, this white capital gave her resources that could be deployed not only with white people from white-majority nations but also with other Vietnamese people. In the example above, this refers to Nhieu's students, who she knew had complained about having Vietnamese lecturers in the past, but who thought of her, "not as a Vietnamese staff member, but somewhere in between...not really white...not really Asian either".

So, what to make of these two examples from IVU in which whiteness was utilised and deployed by individuals who are not ethnoracially defined as white? The point I wish to make here is that whiteness is separate from the humans who may possess it as a form of capital. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, enacting whiteness is a form of what Mol (1999) would call “ontological politics”, in the sense that whiteness itself has the potential to pop in and out of existence in different contexts depending on its relevance. This is not to deny the power and privilege that being ethnoracially assigned as “white” brings — quite the opposite. An ethnoracial assignment of whiteness is just a more durable form of enactment than, say Joseph’s deployment of Carl’s whiteness in surrogate form, or Nhieu’s accumulated whiteness as a Vietnamese national. This durability, therefore, allows greater potential for the individual to accumulate the capital that can be wrought from “being white”. Furthermore, however, whiteness in this more durable form holds more potential for IVU to use as a resource that the *university* can take advantage of.

Whiteness for sale

Generally, when whiteness is discussed as a resource or a form of capital, this refers to advantages that are directly available to the bearer of that whiteness — much the way that Peggy McIntosh (1988, p. 1) describes white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day”. However, in this section, I wish to turn your attention to the ways that an individual’s whiteness can be utilised as a resource and form of capital by that individual’s employer — in this case, IVU — in order to produce marketable authenticity. As mentioned in the introduction, whiteness was a constant topic of discussion while I was on fieldwork. This was not only because it was made visible by the fact that foreigners are in the minority in Vietnam, but also because there was an “open secret”, as one of my participants described it, that prospective and current students and parents expected to see “white faces” representing the university. This was touched on in Chapter 2 concerning prestige, and we shall now explore the racialised aspects of that in greater depth.

Selling points and touchpoints

According to the staff at different levels and of different nationalities from all over the university, IVU’s “USP” — their Unique Selling Point, or point of difference — is the

“white faces” that populate the academic faculties. Sometimes this was described as having “Western” academics, other times as “foreign” or “international” academics, but when I pushed a little harder, this always still came down to whiteness, as it does in this conversation with Hang, a student recruitment officer:

Hang: It is sad to say, but yes, having a white face and being a foreign academic, it has a little bit more impact in our events [compared to only having Vietnamese academics]. I think naturally [*pause*]. It’s sadly [*pause*]. It’s sad to say, but yeah, they do expect to see foreign academics, but we try to balance that.

Jodie: You mentioned that it’s important to have the white face, does foreign=white before the Vietnamese prospective students and parents?

Hang: Yeah. Yes, it’s sad to say, but yes it does.

Hang — student recruitment officer, Vietnamese, mid-30s, female

Parents also often required wooing, according to the Student Recruiters and Marketing staff of IVU. “We have to give them multiple bites of the cherry,” my friend Nhung from Student Recruitment told me.

They [parents] might first hear about us on a talk show or see one of our ads in the newspaper — first bite. Then they might hear that we’re running a Careers Fair at their child’s high school, so they’ll come along to see what we’re like — second bite. Then maybe they bring their kid to an Open Day event. We estimate that it takes about seven bites of the cherry³² before most parents are willing to commit, which means handing over the money. Up until that point, there is always a risk that we could still lose them. IVU is expensive, the fees are very high. It’s a lot of money for a Vietnamese family.

Nhung — student recruitment officer, Vietnamese, late 30s, female

As mentioned above, not just any academic would be a drawcard in wooing parents, and the Student Recruitment team always tried to take along some foreign lecturers — preferably white — when they visited high schools, so that they were “living up to our international reputation,” Student Recruiter Hang told me. However, the parents were

³² This is something of an odd marketing turn of phrase, because frankly, cherries are very small – would one even be able to take seven bites? The idiom originated as a way to say that something is a rare opportunity and that one was unlikely to get more than one shot at it – ie. “You won’t get more than one bite of that cherry”. However, it seems marketers have appropriated it to indicate that more opportunities must always, somehow, be manufactured to ensure a customer has eaten enough free cherry that they’ll be willing to pay for more.

actively shielded by the Marketing staff from actually *interacting* with the foreign academics, even if those academics spoke Vietnamese:

Yeah, we have to request that the foreign academics speak English, only English. There is a certain *[pause]*, and it sounds pedantic, but there is a certain way and gesture and language that you use for the parents and it's — it can be a little bit sensitive, somehow, and we have had situations where some *Viet Kieu* [foreign-born or raised Vietnamese] academics have tried to speak in Vietnamese and it's just come out that *[pause]*, even though they don't mean to, it comes across a little bit *[pause]*, it can come across arrogant or rude or, you know, or there is a certain language — and it makes — and it creates this perception with parents that this academic is not professional and capable. But if they just speak English, the parents may not understand what they're saying, but the perception they'll have of them is better.

Hang — student recruitment officer, Vietnamese, mid-30s, female

As this passage indicates, parents only want to see a surface-level appearance of internationalisation to prove “international reputation”. They don't wish to engage with international ideas (whatever that may mean), or verify how the content that their offspring will be learning will be either international or local wisdom. Thus, the whiteness of academics was openly and regularly discussed as an essential marketing resource by the predominantly Vietnamese marketing and student recruitment staff. Trang, the Manager of Market Research, even described the white faces of academics as “a physical touchpoint”:

It's a preference of the market, and it relates to our [Vietnamese] history, it relates to our culture, especially in education, and it comes from, even factors like the disappointments of the local markets — of parents and students towards the quality of the local system. It is also related to the desire of having an international quality, affordable quality program variety in Vietnam. It is also a belief, a sort of belief, I have to say, I have to use that word, is that Western things are always better and, yeah, Western and Westerners because face value is important. Face value is important.

So, when people are talking about face value, it's about image association. Western faces are considered educated, professional. You are bringing in international value, high respect. As a face value and image association, and talking about brand image association, you have to make sure that you show the customers a bit of image up here,

give them a physical touchpoint because it's all about association. When I am thinking about IVU, I am thinking about international — international lecturers. I am thinking about international quality professionals and stuff like that.

Trang — Market Research Manager, Vietnamese, mid 40s, female

A touchpoint, in marketing jargon, is any encounter that a customer has with a company and its product or service. But what is interesting here is that a *physical* touchpoint usually refers to an *object* — the popular BTM marketing website, for example, lists examples of some of the more common physical touchpoints as business cards, product packaging, in-store marketing materials and the building or interior design of a company's offices (BTM Website n.d.). For Trang to describe the foreign academics and their “white faces” as a *physical* touchpoint rather than a *human* touchpoint (as a marketer might describe a salesperson or receptionist, for example) is telling, because it implies that the white academics are there to be a form of object for students and parents to encounter, rather than a person with whom to engage³³. This also confirms the point Hang made above about not allowing the foreign academics to actually interact with Vietnamese parents — that was what the Vietnamese academics and student recruitment staff were there for. The foreigners were there to provide an image, an embodiment of Western ideals. They were, in essence, a living, breathing prop, and the whiter they were, the more valuable a prop they could be, so long as they didn't open their mouths and ruin the effect.

Complaints and consequences

Some of the foreigners that I spoke to about whiteness, however, were more sheepish than their Vietnamese counterparts about the idea that whiteness was used deliberately to sell IVU to prospective students and their parents. The first person who ever mentioned the concept of “white faces” to me, Carly, the HR business partner for one of the academic centres, confessed with apparent discomfort that the staff recruitment model was inherently discriminatory based on an understanding of what

³³ There is an irony to this, in that some scholars have argued that white people perceive of non-white people as objects: “White people often are strongly invested in not knowing much about whiteness, especially its emphasis on ownership, because such knowledge would reveal their treatment of non-white people as things, which would disrupt their sense of themselves as morally good” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 128). I must acknowledge that these scholars would potentially argue that using white people in this way is no different, and only worthy of note because they are white. I would counter this by saying that Vietnamese-ness was also used in a slightly different way for marketing purposes, and that this in no way diminishes my argument, which is that racial markers have come to stand in the place of academic quality.

students expected in a lecturer at IVU. Although we were doing this recorded interview in the staff cafe upon her request, she could barely sit still through this part of the conversation, her eyes darting around the room as if to ensure no one overheard what she was saying:

Carly: Because we are an international university and the students and parents have an expectation that the lecturers would be native English speakers and they also have a perception that the person standing in front of the students should look *[pause]* non-Asian.

Jodie: Ah. *[Pause to take this in — Carly observes this with eyebrows raised.]* So *[pause]* does that have implications for employing from within Asia as well as from within Vietnam?

Carly: Yes.

Jodie: Interesting *[pause]*

Carly: So, you need to talk to Marie in Student Recruitment about that.

Jodie: Okay. Okay, thanks.

Carly: So, about the student feedback that we get, about what they want the lecturers to look like and sound like.

Jodie: Oh *[pause]*. Okay. Have you ever had that before, as an HR person, in any other job?

Carly: No, and it's basically — I mean it's basically — it's basically discrimination. We have to discriminate.

Jodie: Because that's the business model?

Carly: Yeah. And that's what we sell. It's the product that we sell.

Jodie: Yeah.

Carly: So, that, you know, we get complaints from students if all of their lecturers are Asian.

Jodie: Wow.

Carly: Yeah.

Jodie: Okay. Yeah. I see that adds an additional layer of complexity.

Carly — HR business partner, white, mid-30s, female

From Carly's demeanour throughout this conversation, I expected it to be challenging to find out any further information. On the contrary, however, people brought it up with me regularly, justifying or explaining these "discriminatory" practices, as Carly described them, via the existing culture of complaint from the student-customers that the university constantly sought to please. Even while telling me directly that they thought the practices were racist, top-level executives used student complaints as a reason both to justify discriminating against non-white applicants in the recruitment process and exploiting white employees for their looks. In this interview, Wesley, a member of the executive committee at IVU (who was on a recruiting trip in Hanoi at the time and so we were speaking over Skype video), openly acknowledged that discriminatory recruiting practices were a business necessity:

Wesley: Yeah. And we could be — we could be so crude as to say our students want a white face in front of the class.

Jodie: Yeah.

Wesley: That's horribly racist. But they feel that's what they are paying for. They do. But having a white face doesn't make you a good teacher.

Jodie: No. Where does the stuff about white faces come from? *[pause]* Where do you hear that, primarily?

Wesley: Complaints. It's in the complaints. It's in the complaints from students, sometimes from parents. And every now and again our marketing and recruitment do focus groups with students. Also, our student council collect data from students, and it resonates regularly and consistently. And unfortunately, unfortunately – yes, having a white face doesn't make you a great teacher, but unfortunately, the teachers we have who are based on Asian descent, are not really good teachers. Because if they were all fabulous, we wouldn't get these [student complaints]. Because the students may come

for the first two weeks and go *[rolls eyes]*, 'Oh, god.' But as soon as the teacher's fabulous, they're fabulous, it doesn't matter if they're Asian anymore.

Wesley — Executive Committee Member, white, male, early-50s

For Wesley, the discrimination against non-white, and particularly Asian academics was justified not only through the need to satisfy the student-customers via the appearance of international-ness, but also because the Asian lecturers that IVU *did* employ were not what he considered to be great examples of what a lecturer should be able to do. Interestingly, other white academics strongly denied this idea. An example came up while speaking with a program manager, Ivan, one evening in the Calmette Cafe. Ivan was one of the few white staff I met who spoke competent Vietnamese. His wife was Vietnamese, and he had worked in an all-Vietnamese environment before being employed at IVU. To his disapproval, upon taking up the position of IVU program manager, he had been informed that his employment had at least partly been based on his being a tall, white American male, because they needed a white face to be “the face of the program”. When I asked him about the lecturing experience and competence of his Vietnamese staff, he was adamant that they were often better than the foreign academics, and more popular with the students because they genuinely understood the Vietnamese job market that the students would be entering.

Ivan pointed out, however, that he knew that the senior executives didn't see it that way. To illustrate, he recounted an experience of trying to promote a lecturer to the level of Course Coordinator to manage a new course being introduced. There were two candidates: the first was a woman who had been a lecturer with the program for several years, was very highly qualified and respected and, in his opinion, “one of the smartest and most competent Vietnamese people” he knew. The other was a white man with no working experience in Vietnam, who had been in the country for 6 weeks, and who had a lower qualification than the Vietnamese candidate. But, Ivan told me, the Head of Centre was adamant that a white man was necessary for that position. Ivan said that he and the Head of Centre “went ten rounds on that one”, but in the end, the white male candidate was offered the position, “for the sake of appearances, because it's what the parents [and students, he later clarified] want to see.” Again, we see an example where the academic who was best equipped to have accumulated and to deploy white capital

was valued above the academic with more traditional academic qualities, such as qualifications and teaching experience, even ignoring pragmatic concerns such as the Vietnamese academic's superior knowledge of the course, the students and the context.

Accumulating institutional whiteness

Given the notion that IVU is promoting and selling whiteness to prospective and current students and parents, one must ask what methods the university was employing to accumulate this white capital, especially being based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. I would argue that there are two critical sources from which IVU accumulates its white capital — from its white staff, and from the whiteness of its spaces. Let's take each in turn.

Whiteness for a wage

Firstly, I would posit that IVU had to “purchase” whiteness from their foreign academic employees in order to have something to onsell³⁴ to prospective students and parents. Therefore, in addition to selling various forms of labour to their employing university in exchange for a wage, as will be discussed in Chapter 5 on academic professionalism, academics are also selling their image or appearance — specifically, their varying degrees of whiteness. According to my Vietnamese academic informant Nhieu, introduced earlier in this chapter, the Vietnamese academics saw this as a downside for their foreign counterparts, something that made them an object of pity but also of disdain. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, when we were discussing how foreign academics are paid a higher salary than their Vietnamese colleagues holding the same qualifications and doing the same work, she surprised me by explaining that the Vietnamese academics felt sorry for the foreigners because they were being exploited for their looks:

I, yeah, but also in a very condescending way I think some of [the Vietnamese academics] also think that if our — this is going to sound horrible, but — if our non-Vietnamese colleagues are going to be sort of used to a large extent — their image, the idea of them — they are going to be used in their capacity to sell this product to students, then it's probably fair to pay them more, in keeping with that idea that we

³⁴ Onsell (verb): To sell (an asset, especially one recently acquired) on to a third party, usually for a profit. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018)

need to have certain faces in the program to validate the program, to validate the products.

Nhieu — lecturer, Vietnamese, early-30s, female

For Nhieu, this exploitation of image was the ultimate insult to an academic's identity as a professional educator and researcher, because it flew in the face of all her notions of academia as "the life of the mind". Rather than seeing the foreign academics' higher salary as entirely unfair, she (and allegedly, her Vietnamese colleagues, at least some of the time) felt that the foreigners deserved compensation. She suggested that the trauma of being downgraded from a three-dimensional intellectual, an individual who would perhaps normally be considered more valuable *without* a body — consider the quintessential notion of the perfect, most objective scientist as being a "brain in a jar", harbouring no bodily concerns (Mialet, 2012) — reduced to nothing but a (white) body and face. For Nhieu at least, the sale of her colleagues' whiteness came at too high a cost to them, despite the accumulation of whiteness that she had herself acquired and deployed.

White spaces: An exposition in two vignettes

My fieldwork in Vietnam was funded by an Endeavour scholarship. Accordingly with the rules of this scholarship, while in Vietnam I was under the supervision of a Vietnamese university and Vietnamese supervisor, even though my day-to-day research was being conducted on an International Branch Campus. To give you a sense of the juxtaposition between a Vietnamese university and IVU, let me begin this section by walking you through my first encounter with each.

The first time I went to visit my Vietnamese host university, The HCMC University of Law, I walked straight past it, because it didn't look like I expected it to. A grey, moderately-sized tower designed in the typical Vietnamese modernist style, I mistook it for an office building.



Figure 9: The HCMC University of Law (centre building). Image source: VTC News

My Vietnamese supervisor, Loan, a professor at the university and not coincidentally, the sister of a friend, met me out the front and ushered me towards the elevator at the back of the building — a relief, as she had indicated that her office was on the second top floor and it was incredibly hot. The building was not air conditioned as many of the walkways from section to section were open air, although some of the rooms had air conditioning or fans. The floors were tiled in grey marble, as is standard in Vietnamese educational contexts as it's so easy to clean, though treacherously slippery during rainy season. We passed glass-walled tutorial rooms filled with blue folding chairs and rows of grey laminex desks, lecturers gesticulating towards mobile whiteboards and projector screens at the front of the room and students studiously hunched over their notepads, writing furiously. The students mostly wore jeans, sneakers and t-shirts or polo shirts, which surprised me as uniforms are common in Vietnamese universities. Loan gave me a quick tour of the small but well-stocked library on our way up, pointing out that it was “obviously nothing compared to the IVU libraries, which are famous” but that they were quite proud of their collection. The only downside, she mused, was the lack of access to international research databases, which they found made research quite difficult.

When we arrived at the blessedly air-conditioned staffroom, Loan cleared a space at a communal table for me so that I could do work when I needed to, and I was grateful to have a cool space to work in and avoid the moist, heavy air that hung in the corridors beyond the office door. There were six other academics sharing the office, and their desks, like a lot of furniture in Vietnam, and as well as the trimming around the doors and window sills, were made of a light aluminium, coated in plastic — lightweight and a little flimsy, but ubiquitous and affordable. A portable fan whirred in the corner, augmenting the hardworking air-conditioner but simultaneously blowing papers off the academics' desks every few minutes.

On my first day at IVU, on the other hand, I was met in the large, open-air cafeteria by Duong, a friend from when I had lived in Vietnam the first time. A digital marketer that I had met at a networking event when I worked in the marketing department at the nearby RMIT University campus, Duong had paved the way for my fieldwork at IVU, recommending me to the IVU senior executives and helping me to apply for a researcher visa. On my first day of fieldwork, she bought me a takeaway latte from Truong Nguyen Coffee, then took me on an “official” tour of the grounds to see what had changed since I had last visited her campus in 2013. The glossy, brightly coloured buildings towered over us, as did the tall, canopied trees. She showed me the new academic building, a massive, \$20 million USD facility with slick surfaces, chrome and glass projecting a funky, contemporary feel. Brightly carpeted classrooms with artistically-shaped chairs and desks were fitted with USB hubs and power outlets for students to charge their laptops, tablets and smartphones. The corridors were punctuated with “breakout spaces” for the students to meet, hang out and do group work on comfy couches. Every space was fully air-conditioned — cold even — and the students seemed to be dressed as the Western stereotypes of their faculties in Autumn or early Winter. Design students were in black, fabrics of lace and velvet with dark make up, business students in more conservative “smart casual”, often with collared shirts and blazers, the engineering students more casual again in chinos and light sweaters³⁵.

35 In reality, there are currently four international universities in Vietnam. The promotional videos for each are very similar, and will give you a stronger visual of what an international branch campus in Vietnam looks like. For the Fulbright University Vietnam promotional video, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eikb3titYCM>. For the RMIT Vietnam promotional video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpcUMfRxVDY>. For the British University Vietnam promotional video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmuWuOVTBRI>. For the German University Vietnam promotional video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1GkkMht62c>.

In many ways, both universities were projecting a form of what anthropologist of higher education Jan Nesor (1994) might call corporate mimicry, but what might in this case be more accurately called industry mimicry — an attempt to align the values of the university with the industry values pervasive in the students' future workplaces, through the use of space and material culture. However, the two different universities were projecting different versions of “industry” — one Vietnamese, and the other Western. And as previously discussed, a projection of Westernness is also a projection of whiteness.

Thus, a second way that white capital is accumulated at IVU is through the whitening of previously Vietnamese spaces. American philosopher Shannon Sullivan in her book *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (2006) argues that place and space can *constitute* white privilege and can also be constituted *by* white privilege. In other words, locations that seem to be racially neutral, or at least free of racism, are often still designed to “subtly and invisibly privilege white over non-white people” (p. 143). However, in the case of IVU, this ability to create a space that appears to appeal to the desires of white people is seen in “the Vietnamese market” as an advantage. The buildings and facilities at IVU are indeed quintessential of the modern Western business school; similar to Jan Nesor's (1994) description of business school design, the buildings and facilities at IVU are constructed to evoke the high-powered environment of a multinational corporation, to help students envisage their dream futures. IVU has been designed by white architects to create a Western sensibility right in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, it's true. However, unlike in Sullivan's (2006) analyses, this has been done less for the pleasure or convenience of the white people who work there (although they also benefit from it) and more to cater to the aspirational desires of the Vietnamese students.

It is possible, even, that Vietnamese students are hoping that this whiteness may rub off on them simply by being in its proximity. Sullivan would perhaps argue that this is possible, giving an example in her book of three black men who entered a typically white neighbourhood and, through the combination of their presence and their attitude, acquired some of the whiteness of the space, with dramatic results:

By their entering white space as if they had a right to be there, the race of the three men shifted somewhat to include whiteness. Allowing the men to remain in Howard Beach would involve an implicit if not fully articulated acknowledgement of their partial whiteness by the Howard Beach residents - hence the teenagers' need to violently eject the men so as to secure the men's blackness in distinction from their own whiteness. Conversely, those people who protested the beating became black in a significant sense, regardless of the 'objective' colour of their skin. This is illustrated by a Howard Beach resident's description of an interracial crowd of protesters as 'blacks and white-blacks' (Sullivan, 2006, p. 150)

Unlike in Sullivan's example, however, the Vietnamese students (and to a lesser extent, the academics) are the reason that this white space exists in the way that it does. "The students are mostly here for the facilities," Anh, a Vietnamese lecturer told me. "There's nothing else like this in Vietnam, in terms of the library, the databases, the classrooms, the computer systems. Yeah okay, there is also gym, grounds, aesthetics of the landscaping, that kinds of thing, but for me — okay, more for me than for the students maybe — something that's more related to the academic life is what's most important."

Like Anh, President Goffman agreed that the facilities were a distinct drawcard for students, although she felt that the students were indeed more focused on a combination of aesthetics and convenience, saying that, "when I meet with the student council, usually it's all about, you know, 'We'd like more beanbags. We want more photocopiers, and we want more microwaves.'" Anh pointed out, however, that facilities like these are almost non-existent on Vietnamese university campuses, which makes them a key component of IVU's Unique Selling Proposition. Because they were the kinds of facilities that students expected one would see on a Western campus, they were consequently seen as not just desirable, but essential in characterising the university as "international". Much like the need for students and parents to encounter (but not interact with) "white faces", and much like Carl's Terry Gilliam sketch in which the air ticket and in-flight movies come to characterise key elements of the requirements for flight, the facilities at IVU, in their white, Western glory, are of more critical concern to the university's success than the ability of academic staff in providing academic services.

Whiteness as a proxy for Western academic authenticity

Let's return again to our discussion of marketable authenticity at IVU. As previously explored, the purpose of producing marketable authenticity at IVU is to convince the Vietnamese market that they will experience an "authentic", genuine form of Western academia by joining the IVU family. One of the essential tools for this at IVU is via proxy indicators of "world-class" and "international" quality education (Siltaoja, Juusola, & Kivijärvi, 2018), as was discussed in relation to maintaining the university's prestige in Chapter 2. And one of the most obvious and prevalent of these proxy indicators is whiteness.

As previously mentioned, although the sale and promotion of whiteness on academics was a pragmatic reality for the Vietnamese Marketing and Student Recruitment staff, the foreign marketing staff often seemed uncomfortable with this idea. Marie, the marketer whom Carly had advised me to contact about the need to employ non-Asian looking academics, seemed particularly awkward discussing this with me, although we held our interview in one of IVU's sterile private meeting rooms. Contrary to Carly's assertions, Marie claimed that IVU's Marketing department was not seeking information about the racial preferences of prospective students and parents in relation to the academic staff.

Jodie: So, I've heard from a number of sources that some of the market research that you've done with students indicates that they perhaps have a particular preference for the type of lecturer that they would like to see at IVU. Are you able to tell me about that research?

Marie: Well, I think they are generally *[pause]*, any research in *[pause]*, I don't think it would even be research that we would run, but I think if you went out to the market in Vietnam, the research for — the perception of the international universities would be that there would be a lot of foreign academics here.

Jodie: So, in terms of foreign academics, do *[prospective students/parents]* have a specification of what *[gestures loosely to own face]* ---?

Marie: We don't ask that question.

Jodie: Okay. That's interesting. I have had a couple of people tell me now that there is a preference towards white males. Is that not something you've heard?

Marie: Well, *[pause]* it's not something that we've tested.

Jodie: Hmm, interesting. Okay. So, I guess in terms of the foreign academic idea, and there are quite a lot of Vietnamese academics here as well at the moment, does that play into your---

Marie: Well, we find — we, for example, with the Vietnamese academics, we would prefer to use them for our information sessions at the high schools. We don't need to see a white face. We prefer to have Vietnamese academics because [what they say] doesn't require translation. They really understand, and they communicate better with parents.

Jodie: Yeah, that makes sense. So, you were talking about having academics who accompany you on your high school visits.

Marie: Yeah.

Jodie: And would you specifically seek out Vietnamese academics to be going with you then, or specifically not, or is there a — is it more of a ---?

Marie: Yeah. It's about taking someone who's good.

Jodie: Yeah.

Marie: So, these are for the trips [to high schools] outside, in the provinces [outside of Ho Chi Minh City] you mean? Whoever comes, whoever's willing to come. Yeah.

Jodie: Yeah. Okay. Cool. So, what's the advantage of having the academics with you for those ---?

Marie: Because it's hands-on, they run workshops. They are not giving any information sessions. We never want a foreign academic giving an information session. They've got no idea. They are actually doing something hands on.

Jodie: Right.

Marie: So, they could be building a robot, or they could be doing — I mean it's

hands-on. It's a workshop. We do workshop delivery. So, we would take iPads into a classroom, and then they would create something — or we had this great academic whose name I forgot from the Department of Technology who's Japanese. He did a whole animation thing, with things coming out [*gestures to demonstrate*] and doing this flicking thing and [*pause*], yeah, it's really great. Yeah. Yeah. So, it's that.

Marie — Marketing Manager, white, late-40s, female

In discussing the role of the academics in these student recruitment events, she opened up a bit further, explaining that it was important to choose academics who would be entertaining for the students.

Marie: Yeah, I think we have had a couple of academics who have been great. Yeah, and others who've been scary. And so, I mean, scary in terms of too intellectual and don't know how to speak to kids. So, they would — they could have made the students less inclined to want to go to IVU. Yeah.

Jodie: So, the focus is really on action, practice and also fun? I mean, because they are in high school?

Marie: Yeah.

Jodie: What grade are they in?

Marie: It could be grade 10, 11, or 12.

Jodie: Okay. And 12's the highest grade, yeah?

Marie: Yeah.

Marie — Marketing Manager, white, late-40s, female

What should we make of this description of “kids” in their final years of high school, who have a desire for “fun” and would be dissuaded from attending IVU if they felt the university environment was “too intellectual”? I would argue that there is a prevalent perception at IVU³⁶ that (some) Vietnamese teens and their parents are interested in education only for the sake of getting a qualification, and that therefore, any degree of challenge or rigour implied by the university has the potential to be off-putting to

³⁶ I cannot confirm or deny the accuracy of this perception as I did not collect data from prospective students and parents

prospective students and their parents. But if the goal of the university is not to intellectually challenge students “too much”, then what is it?

One might expect that marketers would be less interested in the educational or academic aspects of the university than the academics (although as I will show later, Marie harboured her own concerns about these issues), but in fact, this came across when talking to academics also. Many of the lecturers I spoke to talked about their frustration with the materials sent from Home Campus, claiming that they were boring, didn’t take the level of the students into account, and did not provide enough entertainment factor for (as one described it) “today’s digitally savvy, multitasking students”. Harvey, a white academic in his 60s, recounted a story about teaching at an Islamic university in Eastern Europe, where “the students had the Sheikh on speed dial” to make complaints about lecturers they didn’t like, and the main thing to do was to keep students happy:

Make it fun, don’t push them too hard, give them a little bit to learn but then have fun in the classroom because if they don’t like what you are doing, every student has the Sheikh on his or her speed dial... so you make it fun, make them see that they are learning some stuff, and it’s better than nothing. So IVU is better than that I think, but I still always try to keep it fun, there should be no stress because there shouldn’t be so much fear around learning, you shouldn’t be afraid of what you’re doing or what you’re saying or how it’s going to be received. So, let’s just make it fun.

Harvey — lecturer, white, late-60s, male

Several academics made ambivalent comments like this — about how making learning fun was an important part of the job, and could even increase the fun had by the lecturer, but was also a necessity in a neoliberal, student-as-customer environment. Many scholars have described in the literature the emotional labour required of being an entertainer to increasingly demanding student-customers (Ogbonna & Harris 2004), and this was an anxiety echoed by some of the IVU academics also. Nhieu, for example, described an incident in which she felt that the emphasis on “fun” in the classroom was inhibiting the learning experience, during a heated exchange with some of the foreign academics in her department:

Also in the discussion was this idea of a “first-year experience” where students — when

we want to hook our students in, and want them to have a good time first, before they decide to change programs. We don't want them to change programs in their second or third semesters, so we need to hook them in the first semester.

So, once they have committed and they feel like they are having fun with the program, there is a better chance for us to keep the students within the program and then at the centre and therefore it's good for business. So, all of those factors came into this discussion that I had anticipated to be only about the quality of the course.

And so, the judgment call I had to make was to make sure that all the materials are still in there, but are they just being delivered in a different way, more "fun" way, while also making sure we are not compromising the rigour, the rigour of the materials and the course.

Nhieu — lecturer, Vietnamese, early-30s, female

I asked Nhieu whether she thought entertainment was something that the foreign academics put greater emphasis on, and although she felt that her Vietnamese colleagues were equally concerned about entertaining students, she did believe that there was a racial element to a lecturer's *ability* to keep the students entertained and "happy":

Nhieu: Yes, race does come into play even in academic — well, even in an academic environment, especially in this one, in an international environment in Vietnam where the university's main selling proposition is 'we are different, we bring in foreign staff, we bring in staff that are different from other brands, other products and services in Vietnam'. And so, it's — I feel that in the back of my head, but it's also cemented by the fact that the Head of Centre himself talked about how it was important to have a white male face as the representative of the first year. So, we have this guy in charge of managing that first-year experience that I was talking about, where we have to hook them in with fun, who is a white male person, who is quite senior in terms of age and all of those factors were taken into consideration by the Head of Centre in appointing that person to that role. And he *said* that, *publicly*, that it's good to have a person who is senior, white and male to sort of be the grandfather of the program so students can sort of lean on him in their first year and ask him questions about all courses within the first year and it is just good to do that. And the Head of Centre cited

results from a report or some sort of douchey³⁷ research or feedback from students saying that they want more foreigners as their lecturers.

Jodie: Research conducted here?

Nhieu: Here at IVU. I can't vouch for the evidence behind that statement, but that's what was communicated, that students liked to see more foreigners because that would essentially just define the fact that they are getting a foreign education, and yes, there is this perception that non-Vietnamese lecturers sort of validate, then, the program that they pay a lot of money for.

Nhieu — lecturer, Vietnamese, early-30s, female

Traditionally, academic values and identities have revolved around intellect, teaching ability and perhaps most critically, research prowess (Bailey, 1999). Nhieu's concern in this passage appears to be that throwing "fun" and "entertainment" into the mix will fundamentally change what academic labour is, and what a university does. This was reiterated in my interview with marketer Marie, who had worked at various other international universities, including an international branch campus in Singapore. She indicated that IVU was quite different from her previous workplaces, and worried, much as Nhieu had, that there was too much emphasis on proxy indicators and not enough emphasis on academic quality:

Marie: In my previous university it wasn't like that at all. People were not — most people were sourced from — there weren't many European academics.

Jodie: Oh, right. That must have been a very different environment for the foreign academics that were there?

Marie: I don't think so. To tell you the truth, just the teaching and the research is just much higher quality there. So, I don't think there is this great big distinction between local and not local, it's like, 'What's your qualifications?'

Jodie: Yeah.

37 Douchey (adj):

1. of or like a douchebag
2. used to describe something only a douchebag would do

Synonyms: lame, weak, sucky

(Urban Dictionary - <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Douchey>)

Marie: There, everyone's got a PhD, everyone's research focused. It's a research-focused university. So, there's no — here, my biggest thing when I came here was, 'Oh, look at these expats, they think they are *[gestures brushing dust off her collar as if to say 'so good']*.' Like, and it felt really like a college and felt like there was just a lot of *[pause]*, it was very different to what I was used to in Singapore. Yeah. Very different.

Jodie: And not necessarily in a good way by the sound of that?

Marie: Not in a good way. Yeah.

Jodie: Okay. So, I kind of want to unpack that a little bit, but I don't want to make you uncomfortable. I can feel that that's a tricky area for you.

Marie: Yeah.

Jodie: Is there anything else that you can say about that or should I leave that there?

Marie: Well, I just think it's — I think that Singapore is at a time in its own development where Singaporeans, well, particularly Chinese-Singaporeans because they were our target audience, have a confidence in — have a confidence in themselves where they don't need to see a white person. Yeah. So, they are actually interested in the university the person got their PhD from. That's what they — they don't — you can't just throw a white person in there. That's not any kind of qualification. Yeah.

Jodie: Yeah.

Marie: And the buyers are savvy. So, everyone should have a PhD, but it's not even that. It's like, 'Where did you get your PhD *from*?' They are about rankings. They're — and it's a good ranking university. That's what they want. They are a much more confident buyer, whereas here, you know, I think that in terms of Vietnam, you know, where it is in its development, it's still a little bit like, 'Oh, foreign is awesome,' sort of thing. But I — that doesn't get you anywhere in a place like Singapore, nor would it get you anywhere in Hong Kong or yeah in these kinds of places — or in Malaysia. It's really about your qualification, your research record, what you're doing, your profile as an academic. And no one gives a toss whether you are an expat or not.

Marie — Marketing Manager, white, late-40s, female

What effect does this emphasis on skin colour have on an academic? I would argue that the effects are multiple and that each contributes to significant changes in the nature of academic labour, as will be shown in the ensuing section.

White privilege, pleasure and pain

White people can be seen as what Sullivan (2006, p. 10) calls “ontologically expansive”, meaning that they often feel that they have a right to occupy or inhabit any space they choose. This appeared to be the case for many white academics at IVU (take, for example, snide comments I overheard about a previously expat-dominated restaurant in HCMC as having been “colonised by the locals”). However, it was a feeling that was disrupted by having the white capital that had always been a source of privilege, turned around and used to exploit these academics for the gain of their employing university.

Enjoying the benefits of privilege

Consequently, I wish to complicate and problematise the traditional notions of privilege — white privilege in this chapter, and male privilege in the next, although of course in reality, as Sullivan (2006, p. 2) points out, “habits of race and gender...are not separately formed only to come later into contact with one another,” but are instead thoroughly intertwined. Although privilege is sometimes seen as a burden, and is certainly something that many academics at IVU are uncomfortable discussing, they still enjoy the benefits of the various privileges that being a foreign academic in Vietnam affords them. Unlike most authors’ discussions of privilege, which usually explore whiteness or maleness (for example) where these are the dominant positions within a hierarchy, my participants were only partially, or occasionally dominant — sometimes they did feel that they were viewed as superior by the Vietnamese around them (and may have seen themselves that way also); other times they felt they were considered inferior to the Vietnamese and that they were treated by them accordingly. Correspondingly, my Vietnamese interlocutors spoke of similarly conflicting views of their foreign academic colleagues — in some ways as neo-colonialists, in others the objects of pity, or dismissal, due to their minority status in Vietnam.

In her ground-breaking essay on white and male privilege in 1988, Women's Studies scholar Peggy McIntosh made a list of 46 ways in which her whiteness gave her "an invisible knapsack of white privilege" filled with resources that "make me feel at home in the world... allow me to escape penalties or dangers that others suffer... escape fear, anxiety, insult, injury or a sense of not being welcome, not being real... keep me from having to be in disguise, from having to negotiate each transaction from the position of being an outsider... Most keep me from having to be angry," (McIntosh, 1988, pp. 5–6). However, whiteness in a Vietnamese context does not give one the same kinds of privileges that McIntosh describes. Although she by no means claims to have created a definitive list — to the contrary, she explicitly states that the list is not generalisable and requests that the reader create their own list from their own life circumstances — it is notable that the majority of the items on her list relate to being a member of the dominant racial group in her society. As a foreigner in Vietnam (of any race, and irrespective of the length of time spent in-country), one cannot claim privileges such as:

- I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- I can go into a bookshop and count on finding the writing of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
- I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative, or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
- I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

(McIntosh, 1988, pp 3-4)

However, there are a number of privileges that come with being different also. Firstly, there is a sense of entitlement to behaviours that may not be acceptable "at home" — this is not so much, perhaps, about having a sense of *white* superiority, but stems more from Vietnamese observers assuming your behaviour is "normal" in your culture (whether it actually is or not), and therefore being lenient or forgiving of behaviours that seem strange to them. I've observed this particularly in classrooms, where some academics may go barefoot or sit on tables while they talk to the class (and

have in fact done this myself when lecturing in Vietnam). Vietnamese students see these behaviours as very odd compared to how a Vietnamese academic would behave in class, as there is a much greater sense of power distance and hierarchy in Vietnamese universities. But this behaviour is not viewed as unprofessional when a white lecturer does it because the students assume that this is part of the more relaxed Western culture.

Then secondly, there are the white academics who *do* feel superior to their Vietnamese colleagues and students — I observed this particularly when academics were discussing the virtues of a “good” student or a “good” academic. By Western norms, these virtues include critical thinking skills, a desire and ability to take initiative, a fluent or near-fluent level of English expression (particularly in writing), confidence in speaking up, asking questions, getting involved in debates, and being open-minded (which may, in some cases translate to being open to Western ways of thinking, rather than assuming that the Vietnamese way is the only or best). This exercise of comparison, and construction of self in opposition to other, seemed to shore up the white academic identity. It clarified where the boundaries of a Western academic’s own academic identity lay. Siltaoja et al. (2018) refer to this as “bounded mimicry” (p. 13) in which a faculty member may partake in “[i]dealizing and fantasizing Western practices... implicate [sic] how the conception of the White man’s burden is reproduced and how it is their duty to civilize, educate and liberate the Other while simultaneously suffering from unpleasant conditions in an unfamiliar setting” (Siltaoja et al., 2018, p. 14).

Then, as has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, a third reframe of academic identity for white academics in Vietnam is through the experience of “being the white face”. Academics, particularly those who have traversed their academic journey with Humboldtian beliefs about the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, seem especially averse to the notion that their appearance should be relevant to their abilities or value as an academic. While debate is rife amongst bloggers and opinion writers about how academics can, should and do physically present themselves (see Robey, 2017, Thomson, 2016, or Mewburn, 2012 for notable examples), there is little to no formal academic research about how appearance, and others’ perceptions of one’s appearance,

can shape academic identity. I would argue, based on my data, that appearance is particularly important in academic contexts in demonstrating how one positions oneself in relation to one's discipline — predominantly through dress. But being assessed based on aspects of appearance that one cannot control, such as skin colour, is in direct conflict with those Humboldtian ideologies. “No real academic wants to be seen as a poster child for the Western postcolonial project in Vietnam,” one told me.

Given how pervasive and complex the experiences of white privilege are for academics in the Vietnamese IBC context, I would argue that this is not something you can combat head on — it is an invisible force built into social structures and is hidden especially from those who have it. Therefore, in order to confront it, you must go in sideways. Aligned with this strategy, Sullivan (2006) treats white privilege as a “habit”; something that is performed unthinkingly, so deeply ingrained in both mind and body that the conscious level does not even have to engage with it:

Habits are formed through transaction with the world...in a world filled with white privilege, habits that privilege whiteness will result, and these habits, in turn, will tend to reinforce, the social, political, economic, and other privileges that white people have. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 4)

In summary, whiteness can be both invisible to white people, and also “ontologically expansive” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 10), giving those same white people a sense of entitlement. This complexity, however, has little effect on the university's commitment to taking advantage of their white academics to produce marketable authenticity.

White guilt

What about those academics who consider themselves “woke”; who are perhaps in Vietnam touting what Fanghanel (2012, p. 9) would call a “transformation ideology” – that is, a belief in the moral imperative of higher education to transform the lives of individuals and societies; who want to use their intellectual abilities for the virtuous task of improving Vietnam; who are conscious (and possibly ashamed) of their white privilege and are wishing to do something about it? This “white guilt” was another feature I observed at IVU and could be considered a form of work on the self, or identity work. However, because someone is “doing work” does not mean that they are “doing

good". Sullivan argues that a desire to "do good", or the possession of good intentions is not enough, particularly because behind these intentions, desires for self-aggrandisement may be lurking. She gives the example of a group of white women who decided to educate themselves about whiteness and the experiences of their non-white counterparts, by forming an all-white, all-female reading group, with the "good intention" of not burdening their non-white friends with having to educate them. According to Sullivan, one of them mentioned the reading group to an African-American friend, who then had to point out to her that the very choice to exclude non-white women from the group was a form of privilege in action. Furthermore, one could argue that this kind of self-education is of just as much advantage to the white women as to anyone else, as was the case with another white female friend of Sullivan's who took it upon herself to volunteer with underprivileged Latina women.

An Anglo woman can enter the world of a Latina woman in order to use the information she gains to profit herself, including the psychological profit that comes from feeling that one is a good person, engaged in projects of self-growth. While self-growth, particularly on issues of racism, is a laudatory goal in some respects, in the context of entering Latino/a space solely for that end, that goal becomes a self-centered way to use Latino/a worlds for white pleasure and gain without any regard for the effects of one's intrusion on those worlds. (Sullivan, 2006, pp. 180–181).

Thus, even when whiteness comes accompanied by guilt, and/or is seen as an unmasked-for burden that catalyses identity work, this work can still be turned to the academic's advantage, becoming another form of privilege. Yet, whiteness will always still be a resource of the academic's that the university can exploit with impunity, and this problematises simplistic narratives about white privilege.

Conclusion

In *Chapter 3: Performing Whiteness*, I have argued that whiteness is used at IVU as a proxy indicator that produces marketable authenticity, and thus replaces the need to demonstrate substantive academic quality to prospective students and parents. It also provides a buffer to academics with current students, who are less likely to complain about white academics than foreign academics of other races, and much less than about Vietnamese lecturers who they see as diminishing the value of IVU's Western (and

therefore white) branding within Vietnam. I have argued, however, that whiteness is not specifically about the attributes of an individual — it can be deployed in surrogate form, as it was by African-American manager Joseph, and/or accumulated by non-white academics as a form of capital that can then be translated into other things, as was the case for Nhieu, who translated her accumulated white capital into social capital that buffered her against student complaints. Whiteness can also infiltrate and imbue objects and landscapes, which in some ways constituted the IVU campus as a “white space” where whiteness was privileged, but additionally served as an aspirational space for Vietnamese students to accumulate whiteness through proximity to and interaction with Western-style facilities.

This chapter has argued that the white academics at IVU are, in some ways and contexts, more valued for being white people than for being good academics. This both privileges them, giving them a form of celebrity status on campus, affording them higher pay, and making it much more likely that students will cut them slack, but also makes them a source of exploitation for the university in ways that make their own whiteness more visible to them than most have ever previously experienced. The key move of this chapter, therefore, was to demonstrate that whiteness in this context is more valued and valuable than traditional academic virtues such as intellect, teaching ability or research prowess, and therefore is a critical tool in producing marketable authenticity at this university.

In the next chapter, I will take these ideas a step further, to explore how valuing a person for both whiteness and *maleness* can lead to a range of nefarious outcomes.

Chapter 4: A Safe Space for Misogyny? Exploring masculine privilege and anxiety

Excerpt from fieldnotes — December 2016:

I observed an interesting interplay today between a foreign academic manager (male) and a Vietnamese female professor that he was trying to convince to join IVU. During this conversation, the guy (who is European) was explaining various characteristics of Vietnamese culture to this female professor (who is of course Vietnamese). Sometimes her face remained impassive, politely accepting the things he was saying (such as that Vietnamese students are very passive in the classroom) and other times she seemed a little taken aback by it (such as when he talked about Vietnam not having any research culture — she is one of the world's leading [type of researcher] and has won awards for the research she has done at her Vietnamese university). On a few occasions, she — very politely — contradicted the things he was saying about her culture, but he didn't really seem to hear her, just carried on speaking, with a brief nod or a "yeah" to acknowledge that she had said something. He was also making jokes with me, as we've met a few times — he talked about his wife and children still being at home in his home country, but commented that he finds plenty of ways to entertain himself here, if we could catch his drift, eyebrows raised as if sharing a fun secret with us, with me particularly. I knew exactly what he meant, because he had told me on one of the previous occasions that we met, at a mutual friend's party, that he enjoys how many different ways one can engage in casual sex in Vietnam, from buying it, to chatting up Vietnamese girls in bars, even to taking advantage of lonely expat women just to mix things up a little. But in this meeting, I kept a very straight face and responded that yes, there are so many wonderful things for expats to see and do in Vietnam, and how lucky we are to have this opportunity to live in this incredible country, and he ran with this as a way to go back to talking about the international environment at IVU.

I should note that I was incensed, watching this play out, so I'm clearly very biased when writing about it, but I've never seen such a display of mansplaining! I don't know how the female professor felt about it though as she remained so calm, and I didn't have the opportunity to ask her about it before she left.

Introduction

The core argument of this chapter is that one of the unintended outcomes and consequences of the drive towards marketable authenticity on an international branch campus is the privileging of masculinity, particularly white masculinity, and the ensuing misogyny that that catalyses. Universities have traditionally been predominantly masculine spaces, and proponents of neoliberalism in universities often cite the neoliberal turn as a driver towards greater equity and accessibility in academia. While I do not argue against this, I provide an alternative perspective to this view of neoliberal universities, demonstrating how a focus on marketable authenticity in this context both allows and encourages men to privilege other men who uphold a particular form of white masculinity as the dominant construct in the space, while simultaneously restricting, constraining, and even punishing women (and to a lesser extent, men) who do not adhere to this way of thinking. Philosopher Kate Manne (2017), whose work I shall draw heavily on throughout this chapter, would call these moves to control behaviours in service of patriarchal norms, “misogyny”.

In *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Manne (2017) argues that, rather than seeing misogyny from the more commonly used psychological perspective — ie. trying to determine whether an individual man “really” does or does not hate women — to instead see it as a type of behaviour that is directed (usually) towards women for the purposes of maintaining patriarchal dominance. Manne characterises misogyny as “the law enforcement branch of the patriarchy” (p. 78), with the patriarchy therefore being the structural norms that maintain society as “a man’s world” and misogyny being the actions that are taken to maintain those structural norms. Under this definition, anyone can undertake misogynistic behaviour, or likewise be subject to it should they deliberately or inadvertently try to subvert patriarchal norms. It is therefore worth noting that not all women will be subject to misogyny in the same ways. Misogyny, in Manne’s reckoning, is used to reward “good women” for upholding patriarchal values, and for willingly providing what Manne calls “feminine-coded goods and services” (p. 84) to men who are entitled to them. This is just as important in upholding patriarchal norms as is the punishment of “bad women”, or women who are temporarily behaving “badly”, in order to get them to behave appropriately once again.

Manne also differentiates between misogyny and sexism. While misogyny is tasked with policing and enforcing patriarchal norms and values, sexism is tasked with justifying them, she argues:

Sexism should be understood primarily as the “justificatory” branch of a patriarchal order, which consists in ideology that has the over-all function of rationalizing and justifying patriarchal social relations. (Manne, 2017, p. 79)

To put this another way, sexism is the belief that women are naturally inferior to men, and that therefore the patriarchal order is a natural and inevitable outcome of inherent differences between the sexes, and of women’s inferiority. On a university campus filled with rational, often liberal-minded individuals, the idea that women are or should be treated as inferior is a very unpopular notion, and not one that I observed being expressed so frequently during my fieldwork. But as Manne points out, misogynistic behaviour does not require justification — it tends to skip over rationality, with no need to go “via the intermediary of people’s assumptions, beliefs, theories, values, and so on” (Manne, 2017, p. 79). It exists merely to mould the behaviours of people, particularly *non-compliant* people, and very particularly, non-compliant *female* people, to the shape of the patriarchal structure.

A final point about Manne's (2017) thesis that the reader must understand to absorb this chapter regards the question of who, if anyone, should be categorised as a misogynist? Manne uses the label "misogynist" as a "threshold term" (p. 60). This means that to determine whether a person is “a misogynist”, as opposed to merely behaving misogynistically, one needs to ask whether their behaviours consistently go above and beyond the norms of misogynistic behaviours when compared with his/her peers within a specific demographic group. This needs to be assessed using a "reasonable woman" approach, or in other words, asking whether a reasonable woman or girl might reasonably interpret the behaviours of that individual as consistently misogynistic compared to their peers. Manne posits that misogyny can exist without misogynists. However, she is hesitant to let either misogynists or those who engage in misogynistic behaviours entirely off the hook. She is quick to urge her readers to consider not only how individuals are influenced by their social environment, but also how their behaviours can perpetuate or dismantle the norms of the social environment — or as

Bourdieu (1977) might have described it, an individual develops his or her habitus over the course of their lifetime, and this in turn structures the way they behave and the attitudes they hold in future. He or she internalises the rules of the field and then reproduces them (thus strengthening them) or resists them.

By these definitions of sexism, misogyny and misogynist, the reader should note that I am not categorising any of my participants as misogynists. However, using Manne's definitions, misogyny as a phenomenon was prevalent at IVU, as I hope I shall demonstrate in this chapter. Male academics outnumbered female academics at IVU 4:1 during my fieldwork, so it should come as no surprise that many of my shadowees and interviewees were men. What was surprising, however, was how openly misogynistic some of these men were when they spoke to me, a younger, female academic who was openly audio-recording and/or making notes about what they were saying about the female staff on the campus. Comments made to me about female staff members' bodies ("Did you see what she was wearing at the pub on the weekend? I couldn't stop staring at the slit in her skirt"), about their apparent ineptitude at balancing work with motherhood ("she's a ball-breaker at work, but then I'm pretty sure she ate her own young"), and about their personalities ("she's so caught up in being seen as a 'good girl', and getting a gold star from management, that she wouldn't know creativity if it slapped her in the face") litter my field notes and interview transcripts.

Misogyny, sexual harassment and institutional sexism in the academy are nothing new — a recent survey of Australian universities (Ellinghaus et al., 2018), for example, reported that 48.7% of respondents had experienced sexual abuse or harassment in the workplace, and 66.2% had experienced sexual or gender-based discrimination. Similarly, in the UK, there are whole projects dedicated simply to telling stories of misogyny on campus (see strategicmisogyny.wordpress.com as an example). What surprised me at IVU, however, was how normalised, how public it was. There was no attempt by these (largely white, middle-class, heterosexual men) to hide their views from me; or from the eventual readers of my work; or from the senior management of the campus — in fact, in some cases, they *were* members of the senior management of the campus. Each time a comment was made to me, or in front of me, that I considered to be sexist or misogynistic, I made a point of reminding my participants that I was

making notes or recording. Almost universally, they said it was fine, I could quote them, often adding that it was all just jokes and good fun anyway. And in part, that was probably true. And sometimes, the things said were genuinely amusing to me, and I laughed too. And this in itself is indicative of the structural nature of misogyny.

It pains me to include this chapter and I resisted the need to write it for quite some time, because ultimately, I genuinely liked the vast majority of people I met during my fieldwork, including those who said and did the things I shall recount in this chapter. Furthermore, as I mentioned above and as you will see throughout, I was complicit in the misogynistic behaviours, at least in so far as being compliant to my own subjugation, for a range of reasons that often overlapped and intertwined. Firstly, my ethnographic curiosity encouraged me to put aside my own feminist inclinations in order to hear my participants out on the topics they wished to discuss and to understand their perspectives — i.e. because it allowed me to gather data. Secondly, I am conditioned to be polite, to actively seek the humour in people's jokes so that I can laugh genuinely and make them feel good about themselves, or if I cannot, to publicly blame myself for not understanding the humour, rather than make the other party feel bad. This is something I've always done, but is a characteristic of my personality that I have become increasingly uncomfortable with as I've gotten older. I found it particularly jarring during fieldwork, realising that I could be encouraging my participants to think I agreed with their perspectives and that the data they were providing me was therefore being received by a sympathetic ear.

A third way in which I was potentially complicit was in desiring to fit in, and be “one of the boys”. I wondered on many occasions during my time at IVU whether, when they said or did particular things in front of me, if this was a way for these older, more experienced, male academics to “test the new girl” or show their dominance over me. To see if I would go along with it, whether I could “hack it” in a male-dominated workplace, whether I could take a joke, or whether I would be a “feminist killjoy”, as Ahmed (2017) would describe it, and ruin their fun. My laughter, even when it was through varying levels of discomfort, indicates that I gave in to that urge, that I wanted to pass the test, to show I *could* hack it, to prove that I *could* be a good sport and take a joke. Therefore, I was unquestionably a participant in perpetuating those structural inequalities.

Thus, it is clearly not in my own best interests to include this chapter. However, in favour of its inclusion is the other side of the story. Misogyny of the type that Manne (2017) describes was observable at every level of the IVU hierarchy, and seemed to genuinely thrive under the auspices of the drive for marketable authenticity. Anxieties over gender discrepancies were a frequent topic of conversation amongst both academics and non-academics on the campus, irrespective of gender, and it would be unfaithful to my data to ignore that. And finally, I feel I must include it because of a conversation I had with one of my female participants after I had left the field, who sent me a message on Facebook messenger that ended with: “This is important. This happens everywhere — maybe not to the same extent, but it’s a defining feature of academia. And someone has to call it out. So be that person. Do it for us.”

So, I will.

In this chapter, I have made a deliberate choice not to use identifiers when describing who said or did what, unless: a) there is no chance that this will make the person identifiable and b) it is absolutely essential to understand these demographic markers in order to understand the quote — instead I refer to interviewees as Respondent [letter] — (eg. Respondent A) and the letters of respondents are in the order that they appear in the chapter. This is for reasons that may perhaps be obvious — I don’t wish to get any of my (predominantly male, in this case) participants in trouble with anyone else, and I don’t wish for any of my (predominantly female) participants to read about themselves as they are viewed by their male colleagues and potentially internalise those perspectives, or feel that their relationships with any of their male colleagues have been damaged³⁸. That is not my wish, my goal, nor my place as an ethnographer. I do, however, apologise to the reader who craves cultural specificity in descriptions of participants, and can only hope that the data that I *can* provide will stand for itself.

³⁸ I recognise that this kind of language is binary. There was in fact a non-binary person at IVU, however they were not one of my key informants and I did not meet them personally. Therefore, in this chapter I will only refer to two genders - men and women - but with full recognition that gender is actually a spectrum. At some point in the future I hope I will have the chance to explore the experiences of non-binary academics, as I think this research area is both important and under-researched.

To make the arguments in this chapter, I first outline the ways in which the university's position towards men has changed, and the ways in which they have responded to their perceived loss of status. This argument of the victimisation of men is inextricably tied into the feminisation of the university, which, in some eyes, has caused an emasculation of academic values and labour practices. I then argue that because of this, some men, particularly those possessed of Orientalist views of the East, may come to believe that an international branch campus is a good alternative, where Western academic values will meet Eastern "traditional" (read: patriarchal) values. Upon arrival at IVU, white male academics do find themselves to be a highly valued and valuable commodity, although this is in fact for the marketable authenticity that they lend to the university (I.e. Their white-maleness) more than it is for their academic prowess. Nonetheless, this emphasis on the value of their race and gender leads many to a sense of entitlement that often leads to misogynistic behaviours. Even men who do not support strong patriarchal ideologies when they arrive at IVU can be changed by this emphasis on marketable authenticity, to the point that female academics from the same Western countries are baffled by the changes they see in their colleagues, and the differences they see between the behaviours of men at IVU compared to how they believe these same men would behave "back home". Meanwhile, the men themselves, irrespective of any misogynistic behaviours they may be exhibiting, express great anxiety about the women in leadership at the university, and a sense of disappointment that their hopes for IVU as an Asian-based Western university campus have not come to fruition.

Victimisation and Feminisation

The victimisation of men in universities

Patriarchy (noun): Literally 'rule of the father', the term was originally used to describe social systems based on the authority of male heads of household. It has now acquired a more general usage, especially in some feminist theories, where it has come to mean male domination in general, as reflected in the systematic disadvantaging and oppressing of women in employment, politics, and domestic life. Sociological and feminist research has documented a huge variety of instances of patriarchal domination. (Scott, 2015)

The “rule of the father”. It is no wonder, given this characterisation of societal positions, that many men, particularly older men in the West, feel that their rightful place is at the top of the societal hierarchy. As previously mentioned, Manne (2017) makes the critical point that people are products of their environment, and that the behaviours that they produce then contribute to reproducing the kind of environment that produced them (similar to Bourdieu (1977) describing habitus as the “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures”, (p. 72) if you will). Therefore, it stands to reason that people of either gender, raised in an environment in which patriarchal values are dominant, may never have questioned why that environment is the way that it is. This is what Bourdieu (1977) would call their “doxa”: “the world of tradition experienced as a ‘natural world’ and taken for granted,” (p. 164). Thus, if a young man had been raised to believe that older white men belong at the top of the societal hierarchy, that it is in fact their *duty* as the “fathers” of society to be in control, then this would understandably feel like the natural order of things.

However, young men are no longer growing up in the same environment with the same structural norms that *assure* them of this inherent supremacy — they may still hear it, implicitly or explicitly, from a range of sources, but it is also contested and problematised by many of those same sources, including by the media, by parents and other family members, by government policies and by schools, teachers and curricula. Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, and Rennie (1997) in their paper titled “Are boys victims of feminism in schools? Some answers from Australia” have argued that gender reform in schools can provoke intense feelings of confusion, ambivalence, worthlessness, anxiety, shame and resentment in boys, who often feel that they are being held responsible for patriarchal structures that they can’t control, and being punished accordingly. At the same time, there has been a moral panic in the media and the public in many countries (usually of questionable basis in reality) that claims that the numbers of young men achieving academic success at school, attending university, and even “succeeding in life”, have steadily declined (Eate, Beasley, Papadelos, Treagus, & Augoustinos, 2017).

On university campuses in many countries, anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action programs have further unsettled the “naturalness” of the notion that men are inherently higher in the societal hierarchy (see Blackmore, 2017, for an Australian

example). This, combined with the increasing number of female undergraduate students, and the move to a student-centred, pedagogical approach to teaching and learning, has led some scholars to speak scathingly of “the feminisation of the academy”. The term “feminisation” in relation to higher education implies both that women are outnumbering men in academia, and that the cultural values of academia are changing to reflect values, concerns and practices that are more traditionally seen as “feminine”. This, according to higher education sociologists Carole Leathwood and Barbara Read (2009), is often used to denote a negative situation; ie. that boys and men are victims, using a discourse of masculinity in crisis, and a related discourse of feminism that has “gone too far” (p. 12).

On an international branch campus in Asia, on the other hand, one could imagine (if one had never been to an IBC before) that these discourses would be muted by their environment. That is to say, a traditional Asian nation like Vietnam, that is still believed (certainly in the West, and often in Vietnam as well) to uphold traditional gender roles and a strongly patriarchal value structure, would be less likely to endorse a university with such opposing gender norms as those held in universities in the West.

The false promise of Orientalism

Excerpt from *The Good Wife* (season 6 episode 5: “Shiny Things”, aired Oct 20, 2014).

In this courtroom scene, *Good Wife* protagonist Alicia Florrick goes up against fellow lawyer Elsbeth Tassioni in a sexual harassment case against a large multinational software firm, J-Serve. The ex-CEO, Camilla Vargas, is suing J-Serve for wrongful dismissal, alleging gender-based discrimination. The defence has called a witness — a Chinese businessman whose company had been in negotiations with J-Serve over a joint venture.

Elsbeth Tassioni: Why did you end your interest in a joint venture with J-Serve after meeting with their then-CEO, Camilla Vargas?

Witness: She was very loud, interrupted our chairman often, refused to pour tea, and she drank too much.

Elsbeth: So, during your negotiations with her, she basically [*pause for dramatic effect*] acted like a man?

- Alicia Florrick: Objection, Your Honour! Relevance?
- Elsbeth: Context, Your Honour. J-Serve worked with sexist companies in China. That doesn't mean they are sexist for requiring Ms. Vargas to work with those companies in a culturally appropriate way.
- Alicia: Oh, come on. Your Honour, is the defence really saying: "Hey, sure, we're sexist, but the Chinese made us do it?"
- Elsbeth: No, we're saying our client made a business decision based on the sexism of an outside business partner. That's all.
- Judge: Hmm. Novel. I will allow.

Notions of “the West” and “the East” are dichotomising by nature³⁹, and there is surely no question that members of Western countries stereotype members of Asian countries and vice versa. What I wish to illustrate, however, both with the above excerpt and with this section of the chapter, is how stereotyped beliefs about a nation, culture, or race of people can inform our decision making, irrespective of how accurate those beliefs may or may not be.

Amidst the “crisis” of university feminisation in the West, an international branch campus in Asia could denote the possibility of a “return” to more traditional gender values — an environment where, according to the beliefs of many in the West at least, the rule of the father is still normal and unquestioned. This, I would argue, is a result of Orientalist perceptions of the East. Edward Said, in his influential work *Orientalism* (Said, 1977/2003, pp. 1-2), points out that the Orient is “almost a European invention, and [has] been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” In a later discussion of this text, Said (1985) points out the impossibility of separating Orientalism from patriarchal dominance, claiming that the Orient has often been described by Western writers in feminine terms, and suggesting that the suppression of Victorian sexuality at

³⁹ I agree with Edward Said in the 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, in which he says that “neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other” (p. xiii) The notions of East and West themselves may be dichotomising, but this does not make them fixed or that their ‘reality’ is based only in what is said about them.

home in the West corresponded to fantasies that Western men in particular held about the Orient.

In *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998), sociologist Meyda Yegenoglu takes this supposition a step further, using the metaphor of veiled Muslim women to explore what she calls the Western fantasy of penetration of, and into, the Orient. Further, she argues that colonial emphasis on patriarchal norms is justified by the West via beliefs that Oriental women are subjugated by their own men, and that patriarchal rule is uncomplicated in these exotic locations — a fantasy in itself for Western men bemused by feminist movements in their own countries.

Anthropologists Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (1997) also discuss the notion that perpetuates in popular culture of repressed Western desires being cultivated in the feminised East. They cite Ann Stoler in saying that colonialism is often seen as a “sublimation of sexuality, the colonies as places where desire repressed in Europe can be released” (Manderson & Jolly, 1997, p. 7)⁴⁰. But what if we were to interpret the term “desire” in this assertion not only in a sexual sense, but also in the broader sense of fervently *wanting* something?

Many academics talked to me about the motivations they believed *other* academics had in coming to IVU. In these discussions they often referred to the allure of the East. These allures included, for example, notions of living (ironically, given our topic in this chapter) in “the Wild Wild West”, where harsh “nanny-state” rules do not apply as they do in Western countries universities, whole books could be scanned and uploaded to the student portal, rather than forcing students to buy textbooks, or movies could be pirated and shown in class without fear of reprisal. Where one could drive up onto the footpath if one needed to hurry to work, or go barefoot in public, knowing that one would simply be excused by Vietnamese onlookers as an eccentric expat. One interpretation of this desire for freedom could be to see it as analogous to the sexual desire that Yegenoglu (1998), or Manderson and Jolly (1997), refer to — the perception that Eastern women are simultaneously libidinous and permissive/passive could be a

40 Although they also caution heavily against essentialising or oversimplifying colonialist thought.

metaphor for how Vietnam itself could be viewed in this context. But this would be a stretch, so I leave that here as a suggestion, rather than an argument.

On the other hand, I cannot stress how frequently my discussions at IVU with men, women, Vietnamese, and expats, included the word “sexpat”. This alarmed me at first, as I’d always thought this term (which conflates the word sex with the slang word for expatriate) related exclusively to paedophilia. However, as I started to dig deeper around the use of this term, three descriptions emerged from my field notes about what a sexpat could be:

1. Someone who moved to Vietnam because of the opportunities to have sex with prostitutes, possibly because of the less restrictive laws around prostitution in Vietnam, or a perceived added layer of anonymity, a preference for Asian women, or the financial possibilities of spending money on sex because of the comparatively high expat salary.
2. Someone who moved to Vietnam because of the opportunity to get a “hot, young, Asian girlfriend” (and often, who found it difficult to find a similarly attractive girlfriend in their home country)
3. Someone who moved to Vietnam because of poorly enforced local laws concerning sex, especially with minors. This also came up regarding having sex with members of other groups that they would be shunned for having sex with in their home country (this came up often in relation to gay men who were semi-openly “out” in their social lives in Vietnam, but had not shared their sexual orientation with family and friends “back home”).

Obviously these differences are important, and nobody that I spoke to was accusing another staff member of paedophilia, fortunately. But the other definitions were used to describe many of the male academics and senior managers, implying that their motivations for moving to Vietnam and joining IVU had little to do with academic career pursuits. In other cases, the motivations to move to Vietnam may have been career oriented, but the lifestyle had become the reason that they had stayed. In an interview with one academic manager (Respondent A), he explained to me that the biggest difference between being a foreign academic and being an academic in your home

country was the social aspect, because it's very difficult to "stop Vietnam from taking over":

Respondent A: I have seen some cases and I have heard of cases that — people have been brought in [to IVU] based on their past work ethics and the incredible success that they've had at other universities in the US, Australia or Europe, and they've come here and they have been — they have failed terribly in their professional life because the social life aspect has just tripled. Yeah. I hear cases of people coming home at three, four, five in the morning and not performing. But you know, these people [the academics who brought the underperforming academics to IVU], they tell me that they've known [the person who is partying too much] for many, many, many years and they have worked together, and they bring them here because they think they are incredible, and then I guess Vietnam takes over and they enjoy life a lot more than they enjoy the job. But a lot of people get carried away. It's very easy to get carried away in this country, very easy.

Jodie: Because it's so available?

Respondent A: It's so available. It's so cheap. It's everywhere. It's welcoming. They are wonderful people the Vietnamese. They would love to have a drink. They love to have dinner. They love to talk. So, it's very easy to feel comfortable. And you know to people, the human race, it's about feeling comfortable.

Jodie: Yeah.

Respondent A: So — Yeah. And then it gets risky.

Respondent A — Academic Manager, male, white

I argue that, for male academics seeking refuge from what they feel to be their victimisation in universities in the West, a Western university campus based in the Orient offers what appears at first glance to be the best of all worlds. On the one hand, a Western IBC promises a familiar professional environment and adherence to Western academic values like autonomy and freedom of speech. On the other, it presents the lure of Oriental passivity and femininity — the perfect complement to Western masculinity.

The most "marketably authentic" of academics?

Having been attracted to Vietnam either by the lure of better career prospects, adventure, an escape from the political correctness of Western universities, or the

opportunity to improve their social life and/or meet sexual partners (or, as was often the case, a combination of the above), male academics (and particularly white male academics, *especially* if they are taller than the average Vietnamese man) arrive at IVU and are met with conflicting messages. On the one hand, they are quickly informed that they are “what Vietnamese students and parents want to see” in terms of academic authenticity — they are held up to the public as the “ideal” academic for Vietnamese students and parents, both current and prospective, to gaze upon and marvel over. On the other hand, however, they arrive to find a university that is highly feminised, with women in the three key leadership positions, a strong focus on good pedagogy, heavily enforced teaching and learning strategies and a student-centred approach. Let’s unpack each of these two notions in turn.

What misogyny looks like at an IBC

An emphasis on producing marketable authenticity on an IBC means that the academics that the external stakeholders most want to see — tall, white men — are considered a valuable commodity, and are often treated as such. As previously discussed, this makes Vietnam an attractive destination for men who may feel that this country is a safe haven from all they believe is wrong with the Western world⁴¹. Consider this Facebook messenger discussion I had last year (2018) with a Vietnamese female friend from IVU (reproduced here with her permission) about a new staff member at one of the private universities in Vietnam:

Facebook Friend: The thing with [private Vietnamese university] — they are currently housing a disgraced creep who got kicked out of [UK University] for sexual harassment

Jodie: I wonder who? [Well-known feminist scholar] wrote about sexual harrasment at [UK University] in her blog, I wonder if he's mentioned in any of her blogposts...

Facebook Friend: yep it's that dude. the dude who got [Well-known feminist scholar] to resign.

⁴¹ This is not to imply, obviously, that Vietnam is *only* an attractive destination to this kind of man. As discussed in Chapter 1, people move to Vietnam for a wide array of reasons, and it is worth also noting that my husband and I moved to Vietnam and lived there from 2008-2013. However, I do feel that this conversation with my friend exemplified a specific type of male academic that one can sometimes find in universities in developing countries.

Jodie: no waaaay

Facebook Friend: so the story is, he sent a pitch to saigoneer, the online magazine, they vetted him and realised that he is the giant creep at [UK University] who pushed [Well-known feminist scholar] over the edge! An ex-student of mine is working there and she told me.

Jodie: wow. that is... wow.

Facebook Friend: Vietnam is where western creeps retire. it's really sad. let me dig up his name.

[provides ResearchGate and LinkedIn profiles for the man in question]

Yep, see, he's at [private Vietnamese university] now. He's the guy whose books are vandalised by students [context — a blogpost by anonymous UK University students was made public in 2016, not long after the feminist scholar had resigned, showing images from the university's library of books that this man had authored, vandalised with stories from female students who claimed to have been harrassed by him]. That dude! Now in Vietnam!

Jodie-Lee: Ugh

Facebook Friend: I guess at least he's not working at IVU... at least not yet.

Facebook Friend — female, Vietnamese. Messenger chat on Nov 13th, 2018

My friend's concern about the possibility that she might end up working with this "Western creep", based on no credential other than his white-male seniority and *despite* his "disgraced" reputation, is telling. She indicates, in this discussion, that universities in Vietnam, including IVU, are environments where one's potential to be marketed as the ideal academic, based primarily on one's demographic characteristics rather than one's academic potential, overrides concern for student or staff safety or wellbeing. And when one can get away with doing something that one wishes to do, why would one hold back?

But what, precisely, does "not holding back" look like in this environment? In Table 2, I have provided some examples from my fieldnotes that I have coded as misogynistic.

To undertake this particular coding round, I first examined how Manne (2017) broke down the behaviours that constituted misogyny. She lists them in the following passage:

According to my account, misogynist hostility can be anything that is suitable to serve a punitive, deterrent, or warning function, which (depending on your theory of punishment) may be anything aversive to human beings in general, or the women being targeted in particular. Misogynist hostility encompasses myriad “down girl” moves— so many as to make the list seem likely to be indefinitely extensible. But, to generalize: adults are insultingly likened to children, people to animals or even to objects. As well as infantilizing and belittling, there’s ridiculing, humiliating, mocking, slurring, vilifying, demonizing, as well as sexualizing or, alternatively, desexualizing, silencing, shunning, shaming, blaming, patronizing, condescending, and other forms of treatment that are dismissive and disparaging in specific social contexts. Then there is violence and threatening behaviour. (Manne, 2017, p. 68)

I then undertook a round of analysis using these behaviours as individual codes. However, I found that they were insufficient for some of the behaviours I had observed that I felt were intended to uphold patriarchal norms, so I added several additional codes (differentiated in Table 2 with my initials: JLT). These were: Excluding, Ignoring/dismissing, Generalising, Minimising by maternalising, and Rewarding “good women”. On a second coding round, I grouped some of these codes together. For example, in this round Patronising and Minimising through Maternalising sat beneath Condescending, although the meanings are subtly different: to condescend is to look down upon blatantly, while to patronise is to sound as if you are trying to be kind, but in doing so, are in fact indicating that you think the other person is below you. To minimise through maternalising, on the other hand, is to reduce a woman to her nurturing abilities, thus devaluing the skills she brings to her substantive work. Collapsing categories allowed me to get a better sense of the shape of misogyny at IVU, which can more easily be seen in Figure 11, later in this chapter. As you can see in Table 2, many of these examples cover more than one kind of misogynistic behaviour. However, I have tried to limit each example to just one code, for greater clarity.

Code Label	Code Frequency	Exemplar of Code
Excluding (JLT)	21	Interviewing prospective scholarship candidates via skype. 3 white male professors, 2 female Vietnamese admin staff. 2 candidates, both female Vietnamese. My shadowee introduces me to the 2 men, but doesn't introduce me to the admin staff, some of whom I haven't met before. They don't introduce themselves either. Men are all in view on skype frame, women on side. After the interview is finished, decision making time. The men speak; no comment from either of the women.
Ignoring/ Dismissing (JLT)	(10)	Female white academic has run a successful event. Two recent events held in the department by male academics have been lauded in the school newsletter by the Head of Department. Female academic sends photos of her event to the HoD and asks if they can be included in the newsletter also. HoD replies that perhaps she would like to write something up, or she could present something at a staff meeting? "And I said, 'No, I don't want to. What I want YOU to do is send out a message like you did for [male colleagues] last semester when they ran successful events.' Like, you know, come on. Let's have some equity."
Condescending	18	During recruitment seminar - excerpt from fieldnotes: "Fascinating to watch these men "mansplain" HR theory to RS, who really clearly wants to get on with her presentation."Yep. Yep. Agreed. Yep. We all agree on that. Yep. I understand. Yep. okay let's move on." But they just keep talking over her to tell her how to do her job.
Minimising by maternalising (JLT)	(3)	Female middle manager - excerpt from fieldnotes: "the new staff, especially the new male staff make a lot of demands of her that prevent her from being able to do her actual job. She understands how difficult the transition is, but she doesn't see this happening to any of the male managers."
Patronising	(4)	Shadowing an experienced female academic during her first semester at IVU - excerpt from fieldnotes: "When we get back to her desk, a [less experienced, male] colleague is there writing a sticky note about what conferences she should attend next year. When he goes, she looks at me sideways and says, 'that was unsolicited. I've already organised my conferences for next year. I have been doing this a while...'"
Sexualising	12	A female academic manager tells me that she has had to coach her female staff on what to do <i>when</i> the foreign male academics sexually harrass them, because it has happened so often they thought it was just a "normal part of Western culture".
Infantilising / belittling	12	Excerpt from fieldnotes: Men refer to women as "girls" at IVU a lot, sometimes even call them "girly" to their face. Both expat women, who are their colleagues, and sometimes their superiors, as well as students.

Slurring / ridiculing	6	Scholarship interviews conducted by 3 male academics - deciding whether to give a scholarship to a young woman from Hanoi: "I don't know, she's a typical Hanoian, just a bit cold, tells you what you want to hear to your face, but you can't really tell what she's thinking'. The other candidate they liked more because she was more "outgoing": "The first girl was straight out of [the movie] Clueless, wasn't she?"
Generalising (JLT)	6	Senior white male marking papers: "I get concerned about personal reflection as an assessment item. Girls do well and boys don't. Because girls like talking about their feelings, while boys are better at the analytical stuff."
Rewarding "Good Women" (JLT)	5	How to be a good female boss, as told by a senior white male academic: "I remember my first interview with the new boss, the one I called "the naughty girl". She asked me, just about a week before she took on the rank, she asked me to have coffee with her and she listened to my ideas and we were getting on pretty well and I thought 'that's quite smart, really', because she would know that I am a real player in the School. I had been associated to heavy research. I had been office coordinator. I was a senior player... yeah, I really liked her a lot."
Blaming	4	A female academic tells me about the difficulty she had getting a job in a specific department at IVU because "apparently he [the male head of department] is mad because my friend wouldn't go out with his friend when we saw them out at a club one night. Also, he apparently thinks my boyfriend comes to work drunk, which he absolutely doesn't, but there you go. What either of those things have to do with ME I couldn't tell you."
Silencing	3	I observed a male academic (white) in the audience of a seminar, having dominated the majority of the Q&A already, interrupt a female academic (Vietnamese) who had put up her hand and been called upon by the female presenter (white), to say, "Excuse me [name]. I still have more to say".
Desexualising	1	"[Female Academic A] is a nurturer, but I actually think [Female Academic B] probably ate her own young". I laugh at this (this female academic has a reputation for being very hard, and is not well liked outside her own team, who love her) but say I don't think I should write that down. Respondent says that I should, with a note that it was said in order to make me laugh, and that it is an indication of his rather black sense of humour.
Demonising	1	Teaching and Learning staff (mostly female) telling me how the academics (mostly the male academics) responded to T&L when a new round of evaluations was announced, even though T&L weren't directly involved: "No, we are not the police! Stop blaming us, this has nothing to do with us! We are not the enemy!"

Table 2: Codes and Exemplars for Misogyny

Having now explored some examples of what misogyny can look like on an international branch campus, let us turn to the possible reasons that it may occur —

namely, the sense of entitlement that can come with being placed at the top of the hierarchy, predominantly due to the value that your white-maleness has to customers.

The entitlements due to men on an IBC

From an environment where white male academics are valued particularly for their white-maleness, I would argue, a sense of entitlement emerges or is enhanced, based on patriarchal norms and values. Kate Manne (2017) discusses the notion of feminine-coded services versus masculine-coded entitlements, arguing that, as an aspect of patriarchal structures and norms, Western men have traditionally been (or have at least felt) entitled to certain perks and privileges, particularly as they are provided by women. These entitlements include things like care and sympathy from, and authority over women, at an abstract level, and might translate to practical entitlements like having the right to speak first or over a woman who is already speaking, having the right to speak one's mind irrespective of the effect one's opinion may have on others, or having the right to gaze and publicly comment upon women's (including colleagues') bodies. Consider this example from my field notes:

This entry goes with a photo I took today [see Figure 10]. I took it just after a male academic had come into my male shadowee's office, and handed him the sketch you can see in the image. It's a sketch that the guy who came in, who was my shadowee's direct line manager by the way, had drawn while sitting in the audience at a choral event the night before. The man in the bow tie in the front row is my shadowee, who had performed in the event. In front of him is a sketch of the world-class Vietnamese violinist who had performed a guest solo at the event. My shadowee's manager came in, handed him this picture, and said, "Sorry to interrupt, I know you've got Jodie shadowing you today, but I just wanted to give you this picture I drew of you staring down the top of that gorgeous violinist last night. I have never been so grateful for a woman wearing a short skirt as I was with her and that violin. I thought you might like a memento." After the manager left the room, my shadowee pinned the picture to his desk, and said, without a hint of irony, "I'm quite touched by that actually. I was quite chuffed that he came along and obviously he wanted to make me feel a bit special — he can be a bit of a bastard sometimes but that was quite nice wasn't it?"

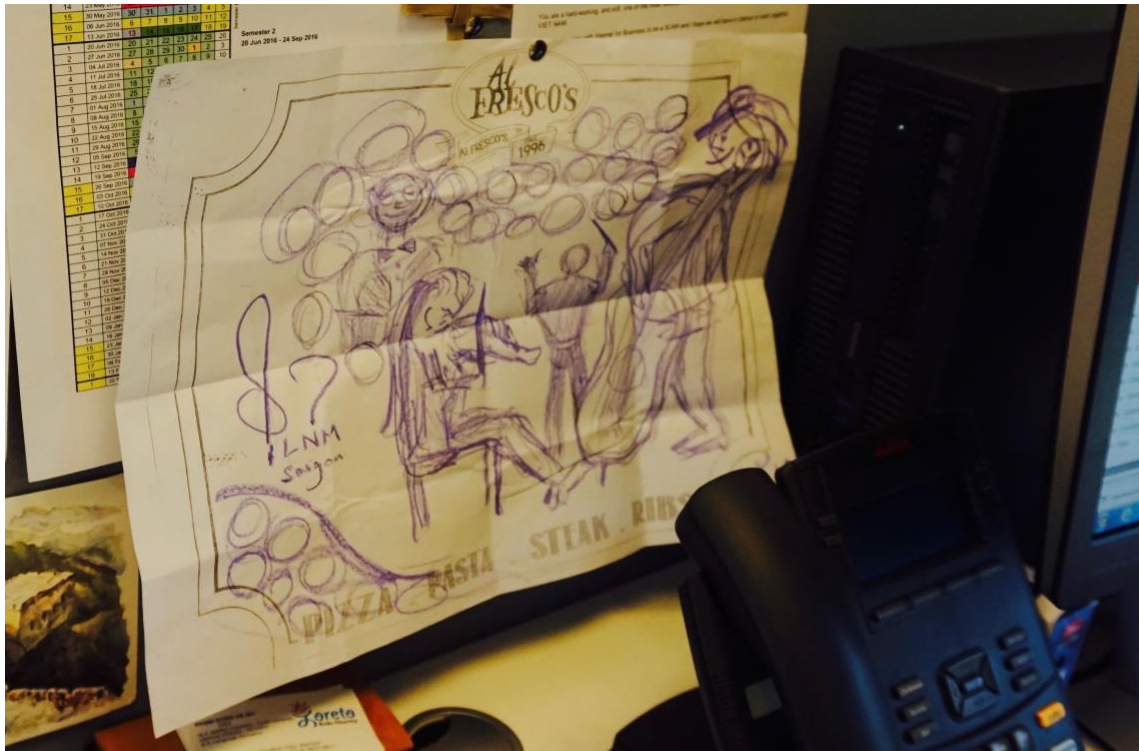


Figure 10: Sketch on shadowee's desk

From this excerpt, you can see how completely normalised this kind of behaviour is at IVU. Not only did the manager create a gift for a staff member that objectified a woman's body and clothing choices as if they were there on display purely for male entertainment, and not only did my shadowee accept this gift with pleasure, BUT this all happened right in front of *me*, a female researcher recording the interaction. As one of my other informants mentioned once, "there's a lot you can get away with here that you'd never get away with back home."

It's important to note again that Manne's description of misogyny is not a psychologising argument — neither Manne, nor I, profess to know what men who claim these entitlements *are feeling*. As with the rest of Manne's argument about misogyny, when men claim entitlements that have traditionally been the domain of men to claim, their behaviours are upholding patriarchal structures. When they do so at the expense of a woman who is also trying to claim those privileges, or punish her for trying to, or when they punish a woman who tries to prevent them accessing these entitlements, this is misogyny.

It matters little whether the men arriving at IVU have experienced this sense of entitlement before arriving in Vietnam. Sociologist Barbara Hobson's recent paper on gender dynamics in relation to parental leave entitlements (2018) explores the conversion factors that can *create* a sense of entitlement. She posits that when group norms, policies, and approved practices support a person in receiving a particular good or service, that person can come to feel a *sense of* entitlement — a belief that they are owed this good or service, and that they deserve to take advantage of it. Being described as having a sense of entitlement is not necessarily a disparagement. Hobson gives the example of a group of men who worked in a global firm in Japan, where men are *not* entitled to family leave and work-life balance was actively discouraged by the firm and by in-group norms. When transferred to a branch of the firm in Europe, where work-life balance was valued and parental leave was a contractual entitlement for everyone, not just women, the majority of these men rapidly underwent significant changes in their perceptions and attitudes towards what they felt they were *owed* and *deserved* in relation to work-life balance. A similar phenomenon occurs, I argue, with men arriving at IVU. Even if they did not have a pre-existing sense of entitlement related to patriarchal norms, the majority of IVU's policies, rhetoric, and group norms quickly encourage them to see themselves as being at the top of the university hierarchy, the most valuable human resource the university has (even if their value lies in their appearance as a white man, not in their abilities as an academic). It is therefore unsurprising that many of the men at IVU behave towards others as if they do indeed have higher status and are of greater importance than the non-white-males around them.

Casual, everyday kinds of examples of this abounded (as they do in most workplaces in most countries, I would posit). To be specific, across the 96 documents I analysed for this thesis — 25 days-worth of shadowing fieldnotes, 23 days-worth of general observation fieldnotes and 48 formal interviews — I applied the codes for misogyny, sexism or patriarchal structures 143 times. There were not instances in every document — in fact, in only 49% of the documents had I made mention of something that I later coded as misogyny, sexism or patriarchal structures according to Manne's (2017) definitions (see Table 2). However, considering that I was not specifically asking about

gender, and had no intention of including a gendered perspective in this thesis prior to undertaking fieldwork, this was a striking result.

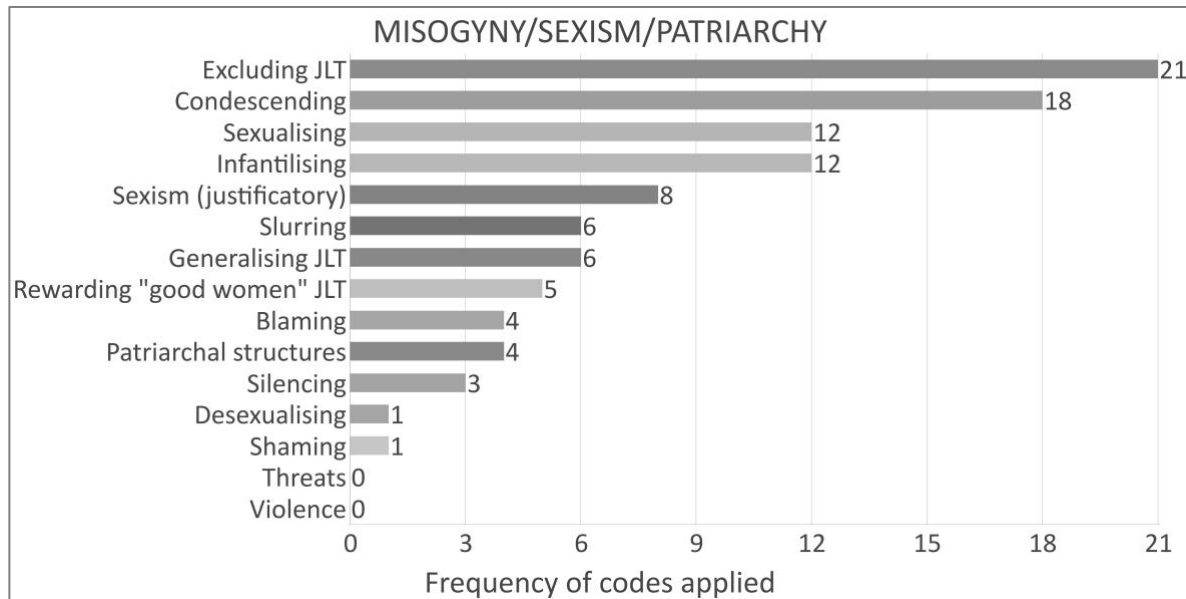


Figure 11: Diagram from MaxQDA Software for the Subcode "Misogyny/Sexism/Patriarchy"

While Table 2 (on pp. 142-143) provided a broad overview of casual, everyday kinds of misogynistic behaviours, a more dramatic example will better demonstrate my argument that an extreme environment of white male privilege can create unusually extreme cases of casual workplace misogyny.

This incident occurred one day in IVU's Calmette Cafe, the indoor, air conditioned staff cafe where many of the foreign staff ate lunch. The manager of the cafe, a Vietnamese woman named Linh, had been running the Calmette since IVU opened 10 years ago. She knew almost all 600 staff members by name and knew their coffee orders and special quirks (by the time I left fieldwork, she knew that I often preferred to eat from a bowl instead of off a plate — the granular nature of her intel was truly impressive). The meals at the Calmette were on average about twice the cost of the meals in the outdoor student cafeteria downstairs, which meant in US dollar terms that they were closer to \$2 rather than \$1, for a plate of hot food served from a bain-marie. I befriended Linh early in my fieldwork as I spent quite a lot of my observation time in the Calmette, and in quiet moments she would sit with me and tell me what it was like, having all these foreigners around. Linh enjoyed her work, and the opportunity she had had to improve her English and learn about so many different countries. She lamented the need to have "the food costs so high", but her boss, the owner, was paying IVU

handsomely for the privilege of taking up an indoor space with air conditioning — only one other food outlet on campus had this, making these the two most popular lunch options with staff.

On the afternoon in question, I came into the Calmette for a coffee with no specific agenda (often I was meeting key informants or friends or working to a deadline), and as soon as I sat down, Linh marched over to my table, visibly agitated. Calling for one of her staff to bring us both coffee, she told me that she had “had a fight” with one of the (older, white, male) senior academics, and was very upset about it. She often gave him a larger serving than others, because he had complained about serving sizes when he first arrived at IVU, and Linh always aimed to please. Ordinarily, a double serving would increase the cost to US\$3, but if no one was around, she would instruct her staff to sneak a bit extra onto his plate with no charge. She was adamant that she had made it clear to this academic that she was doing him a favour. However, on this day, he had come into the Calmette right on the peak lunch period, and Linh felt that she couldn’t give him the extra food without it being seen — if she publicly gave him a larger serving for free, she would have to give everyone in the line extra food for free, which would hurt her bottom line and get her in trouble with the Cafe’s owner. When the academic questioned the serving staff about the portion size, they asked if he would like a double serving, and he said, “yes, of course.” Then when he got to the counter, Linh charged him for the double serving. The academic was incensed. He began to shout at Linh, calling her “a crook” and saying she had scammed him. Linh tried to calm him down, explaining that a double serve cost extra money, that was the rule, it said so on the menu (which it did) and she was not trying to scam him. He shouted, to her and to the rest of the cafe, that the Calmette staff were dishonest and that he would be using what power he had to ensure that his department would not be using their catering services to cater departmental functions any more. He then slammed his tray down on the counter and stormed out, leaving the food there without paying⁴². Later that afternoon, a catering order that had been placed with the Calmette by that academic’s department for the following week was cancelled.

⁴² As I did not observe this event myself, I asked Linh if she remembered who else had been around, then followed up with witnesses to the event. Although I describe this through Linh’s telling of it, I was able to verify the details of her depiction with three other people who had seen it happen. Later, I also overheard this same academic bragging about it to one of his colleagues. The story soon became part of IVU’s commonly understood mythology, so although it would be clear to someone at IVU who I’m referring to with the person I call Linh in this story, the story itself is well known anyway.

One way to explain a performance like this is to assume that this person was an oddity, an exception. But what if we instead treated it as a more extreme version of the patriarchal norms being exhibited in other ways on the campus? While Linh believed herself to be doing this academic a favour by giving him a larger portion at no extra charge, his response implies that he felt entitled to it, given his outcry when it was denied to him. Not only did he punish Linh by making accusations, publicly denouncing her for being dishonest and “a crook”, but he also punished her by “using what power he had” to withdraw his department’s custom from the Calmette — no minor punishment, Linh told me, as his department held more frequent, and more expensive events than any of the other departments.

Why would this academic feel that he was entitled to something for free, and why would an extra dollar matter so much to him, given his relatively high, expatriate-grade, senior academic salary? In this situation, I would argue that a combination of factors were at play. Firstly, Linh had denied him a privilege that she ordinarily provided. Secondly, she had denied him publicly, which in her mind equated to charging him the accurate price for his lunch, but may for him have amounted to a public slight. Thus, he confronted her with her error, believing himself to be in the right and assumedly hoping that she would see this and atone for her failure to provide him with the privileges he felt entitled to. Instead of this, however, she instead became angry herself, as if *she* were the one who had received a slight. Given his high status and her low status in the patriarchal order, perhaps he felt that it was his right to describe her as he saw fit, and her role to receive and accept the wisdom of his description — but she did not. Thus, although Linh was only charging him a dollar more, repaying this slight in kind was not only about the money, it was about the principle, and a response of denying her (or her boss in this case) hundreds of dollars in custom would therefore seem proportionate.

As Manne (2017) points out, while *sexism* provides justification for upholding patriarchal norms, *misogyny* does not require rationality. Misogynistic behaviour occurs in order to shape the behaviours of others, particularly non-compliant *female* others, and to punish those others for not upholding patriarchal structures. My earlier question — why would a relatively wealthy academic believe that he was *entitled* to something he

had only ever been offered as a *gift*? — becomes irrelevant in the face of this logic. Patriarchal — not to mention colonial — norms dictate that an older white man has higher status than a younger Asian woman. Therefore, he is entitled to whatever she gives him, and she is not entitled to deny him that, or further step out of line by publicly arguing with him. From his perspective, it may have seemed to him, Linh's behaviour was the kind that needed to be nipped in the bud.

The socialisation of women on an IBC

In the previous section, I demonstrated how the propagation of the patriarchal order at IVU can lead some men to gain or expand their sense of entitlement beyond what they may have held in their home countries. This, I argue, is due to the discrepancy in anti-discrimination laws and policies, as well as in group norms, between IVU and most Western universities. It is tempting to explain this phenomenon using Said's Orientalism (and gender-specific analyses such as those by Yegenoglu (1998) and Manderson and Jolly (1997) that have built on his work in the years since). But if we rely entirely on this framework, how do we explain the misogyny experienced by the foreign, and predominantly white women at IVU?

Many of the female foreign academics in my study, coming mostly from Western countries, were shocked to discover that the men from their own or similar countries and cultures behaved very differently in this new environment. Respondent B, an amiable Canadian academic in her early 40s who had been working in the US before coming to IVU, relayed a story about the manager of her department, an Australian who had been working in her home country for more than 20 years before he moved to Vietnam. When two male visiting academics from high status American universities arrived for a visit, the manager in question arranged a dinner at a restaurant in the city centre in their honour. Upon arrival at the restaurant, Respondent B, who was the only other senior academic in the department at the time, realised that she was the only woman in attendance, although most of the *Western, male* academics from the department, at all levels of the hierarchy, were there. She didn't know whether any of her female colleagues had been invited, and as none of the Vietnamese academics of either gender were in attendance, she was also unsure if they had been included, but as she was relatively new at the time, she didn't feel it was appropriate to ask. She felt

particularly shocked when one of the visitors commented that it was a very masculine department and perhaps they should consider hiring more women, and the manager responded by telling the visitor not to worry, there would be plenty of female company at the bar they would be going to after dinner.

As the only female in the group, Respondent B said she felt highly uncomfortable, particularly not knowing whether she had been singled out to attend — and if so, what did this imply about her, that the manager felt she would want to attend but other women in the department wouldn't? Did her manager think she was “a good sport” and wouldn't mind a bit of “girly bar” shenanigans if it meant getting included in the event? Did he think she was “into” that herself? Was it purely out of protocol because she was the next most senior academic in the department, and she had only been invited so that she wouldn't make a scene about *not* being invited? Or, if the other women in the department had been invited but had chosen not to attend, had she committed some faux pas by accepting the invitation? Perhaps “everyone knew” that these events were really for the men? Whatever the case, after dinner, Respondent B chose to head home, rather than continue onto the bar where further entertainments had been promised, as did the two visiting academics.

I later spoke, separately, to two of IVU's male academics who had attended the same dinner. Both said that they felt they didn't really have a choice but to attend — invitations to those kinds of events meant being in the inner circle, and a lot of bonding, if not outright decision making, went on there. It wouldn't have been prudent not to attend, but one of the men did say that he had chosen not to go the *next* time the opportunity arose, as it had made him uncomfortable.

This was just one story of many that female academics at IVU recounted to me as examples of their shock at how different their male colleagues' behaviour often seemed to be in Vietnam, compared to how they would have behaved in their home countries. Respondent B, in the example above, made a point of emphasising that the visiting academics, also male, were also shocked about this behaviour. There was frequent debate amongst the women at IVU as to whether the men whose behaviour had changed had always wished to behave this way, and were just finally in a context in which they

could “get away with it”, or whether the context itself had catalysed a change in the individuals.

Anthropologist Anne-Meike Fechter (2007) in her ethnography of expatriates in Indonesia rightly identifies that traditionally, Orientalism refers to a Western male and an exoticised feminine “other”. Yet in the context of expatriates in Jakarta, this seemed also to apply to the women who were in many ways *not* “other” to the men who were upholding these Western patriarchal norms — that is, the expatriate women. She argues that white women in Jakarta (and historically, those who were trailing colonial wives), dwell in “an ambiguous position as members of the powerful group of Westerners on the one hand, while being disadvantaged as women in largely patriarchal systems on the other,” (p. 29). In a later chapter exploring the lives of younger Western expatriates, one of her participants declares to a group of friends at a party: “Most of the expat men you meet in Asia are bastards — they seem to become like that here,” (p. 135).

I asked one of my Vietnamese female participants (Respondent C) if she could see a hierarchy in her own academic department:

Respondent C: Well, there is a hierarchy, but how the hierarchy is perceived is unclear. Sometimes I feel like Vietnamese local staff would feel like they have more power because this is their land, but sometimes I get the sense that they also feel intimidated by the fact that their non-Vietnamese colleagues are non-Vietnamese and therefore probably deserve more privileges although they probably resent that if that makes any sense. Yeah. But I do think there is a male bias in the way that top management in this department — in the way that the management at the department raises, sort of, making decisions, and I say that as a woman, so I may be wrong. But yes, there are things like Hanging out with the Guys, Having a Beer with the Guys, Guys’ Night Out, that were only, that was made very clear that only guys were allowed. So, I don’t think I am being unfair completely. If we only talk about gender of course it’s not like female colleagues were completely ignored or treated unfairly in any outrageous kind of sense, but the fact that there are events and there are sort of “male hangouts” that clearly women weren’t invited because of the perceived nature of the hangout or the perceived nature of the dynamic that that management wants is sort of disturbing.

Jodie: What do they do together?

Respondent C: I wouldn't know. But yeah, there are lunches that... and there are conversations about how the boys had fun last night and the boys had fun in, doing lunch in Hanoi, that of course made me uncomfortable as a female staff member. But yeah, it's not like I feel left out, but I just find it unprofessional that, of course that there should be bonding, of course there should be activities outside of the work capacity that people get to know each other better and I think there are merits to that. But if it's a thing that excludes women, particularly, then I sort of, take an issue with that, but it's just the kind of culture that we live in with the department. Yes. Ironically, [Vietnamese] women colleagues sort of are seen as, their best values are in, you know, bringing industry relations and working with local people, local industry people or companies or — and not in the same extent and not in the same capacity that the male colleagues are being utilized I guess.

Jodie: Hm. Okay. So, you also mentioned the race aspect, so —

Respondent C: Just wanted to put it in hierarchy.

Jodie: Well, yes, but can we unpack it bit by bit? So, you said Senior White Male at the top, so we've talked about the gender aspect about that, what about the white aspect of that?

Respondent C: The white aspect... [*musings*]

Jodie: Because not all of the foreign academics *are* white, right? So, is whiteness a thing in that hierarchy?

Respondent C: Whiteness is definitely a thing, but I think gender plays sort of a bigger role if you ask me to weigh it. So, I would say this, so Senior White Male, Vietnamese Male, Vietnamese Woman and then White Woman, which is kind of strange, but that's how I sort of perceive the hierarchy of power being put in the department. That's probably Orientalism, because of us "exotic Vietnamese ladies" [*said sarcastically*], you guys [*gesturing to me as a white woman*] should be higher. But yeah, it sounds terrible. But that is sort of how I personally, as an individual navigating through the system, understand the hierarchy that dictates how I should act in the environment.

Respondent C — Vietnamese, female, academic

What may stand out in Respondent C's analysis is the notion that white women, in particular, are disadvantaged, even though through their whiteness, they "should be

higher” in the hierarchy than Vietnamese men and women — their whiteness should lend them more capital than their femaleness takes away, but it doesn’t necessarily. What was also interesting to me was that the non-white foreign female academics in this department were left unmentioned in the hierarchy (both by Respondent C and myself, by not following up). On another occasion, Respondent C did talk to me about the poor treatment by her manager of one of her non-white female foreign academics that seemed to imply that non-white foreigners were, at times, even lower in the hierarchy of her department, because they didn’t have the same degree of “strategic importance” that their white and/or male colleagues could claim, yet also did not have the value of industry connections that the Vietnamese female academics possessed:

So, there was this big conflict that sort of made the office — turned the office pretty quiet over the past few weeks was with the Head of the Department and a female foreign academic staff, Asian, who is doing a PhD and who was seen as not completing her PhD in an appropriate amount of time⁴³. Yeah. And so, that was the conflict. Would that be a conflict or would that just be a fair assessment of expectations of how the staff should be performing? I am not sure. But it created a sort of feeling in the office that you would get picked on occasionally by management if you don’t fit into the profile of what management sees as “strategic importance”.

Respondent C — Vietnamese, female, academic

As this section has illustrated, foreign men are quickly socialised into an understanding of their “strategic importance” at IVU, based on their marketability to Vietnamese students and parents, while foreign women inhabit an ambiguous position in the hierarchy, depending on what combination of capital they are able to provide to IVU in exchange for their wage. If they are white, their whiteness may or may not overrule the disadvantage of their gender. Furthermore, the leadership of the department was a critical factor — in Respondent B’s and C’s departments, the department manager led the group in normalising racist, misogynistic behaviours. In one of the other departments that was led by an African American man (Joseph, whom you met briefly in Chapter 3), I never heard non-white, foreign academics of either gender complaining that they were lower in the hierarchy, although some of the

⁴³ The lecturer in question had started her PhD in 2011, had been working on it part time for 5 years by the time of this conflict, and her PhD supervisor felt that she was on track.

Vietnamese staff in that department did feel that they held lower status than their foreign colleagues. Wherever people sat in the hierarchy, there was at least a general agreement among non-white, and non-male academics that White Men sat comfortably above everyone else. However, this was not the story I heard from the white men themselves.

Anxieties about feminisation

Excerpt from field notes — September 2016:

[Respondent D - a white male academic] is concerned about the amount of power that the Teaching and Learning (T&L) team have at IVU. He believes that the power has gone to their heads. He gives me an example of a confrontation he had with a female T&L manager. It started because he was "bitching" with his then girlfriend (she started it) about this woman. He was drunk. Then after he and his girlfriend broke up, his now-ex told the T&L manager's husband what he had said about her (everyone knows everyone around here, the expat community is so insular). Then one day, the husband got into an elevator with [Respondent D] and when the doors closed, he pushed [Respondent D] up against the elevator wall and said, "What have you been saying about my wife?"

[Respondent D] said he felt really bad about what had happened, so the next day he went to the T&L manager's office to apologise. When he arrived, she looked at him disdainfully (he demonstrated by flaring his nostrils and looking down his nose) then told him to sit down. She then stood over him, peeling and eating an orange, while he told her how bad he felt and that he took it all back. When he was finished (he said) she looked at him for a moment then told him "Everyone here thinks you're a joke. It's universal. Everyone thinks it."

He tells me that he took it gracefully, stood up, said he was sorry again and put his hand out to shake and let bygones be bygones. However, she refused to shake his hand, saying "They're sticky from the orange."

In this section, we return to the opening argument of the chapter — that men in Western universities, when feeling victimised by the feminisation of their workplaces and professions, may therefore be attracted to international branch campuses in Asia as a way of escaping the "political correctness gone mad" as one of my participants called

it. However, despite the promise of privilege that the emphasis on the Marketable Authenticity of white-maleness implies, white male academics' recounted experience of IVU does not often reflect a *feeling* of privilege. Many felt indeed that they had lost their academic freedom and autonomy.

Much of this perceived loss was related to the Teaching and Learning Department, which was overseen by the Vice President Academic — one of the three female leaders of the university. This was also one of the few departments where there were more female than male middle managers. Although IVU had always had a strong emphasis on good teaching, it was around the time of the infamous 2014 Restructure (mentioned in Chapter 2 and discussed in detail in Chapter 6), that T&L reform really took hold. Consider this excerpt from my field notes, following a dinner I attended. All of the attendees were ex-IVU-academics, who had now moved into professional roles at the university. One of the men was teasing one of the women about her new role in the Teaching and Learning team.

It was also interesting listening to [man] ribbing [woman] about working in T&L. He was saying that we all must now bow down to the almighty T&L agenda, and how we needed to watch what we said at dinner, because [woman] had crossed over to the dark side.

This notion that the T&L team were now a powerful force (often for evil, if you believed many of the specifically male academics) was one I heard frequently on the IVU campus. Consider this excerpt from an interview held in one of IVU's private meeting rooms (think storm grey carpet, lime green office chairs, glossy white desk against the shuttered window and with us facing each other in front of it) with a male key informant (Respondent E), who was explaining to me why a pedagogical approach was excellent for primary school, and for girls' education in particular, but inappropriate at a university:

Respondent E: Now, fast forward to university. You know, if somebody fails their brain surgery course, that's an individual problem for them. It's not a societal problem. Whereas the societal problem is if a kid can't read, right? So, I feel like, you know, the 'whatever it takes', hand-holding model [of education] is really, really important down there [at primary school level], but it's really the *opposite* up at the top.

Jodie: Okay...

Respondent E: And so, what traditionally a university has been, you know, like, 'You are in the pool now, you better start learning how to swim,' and, 'Okay, I'll give you a few strokes now, I am not going to throw you right in the deep in right now, but you know, it's going to be soon.' So, it's that, that area there, that's what I am thinking about in terms of the feminisation of, the move of this feminine model of teaching, which is incredibly effective at the *younger* ages.

Jodie: Okay. So, essentially the argument that universities have been emasculated and become more feminized is that they have become more nurturing—

Respondent E: — Yeah, certainly they've become more nurturing. Yeah.

Jodie: — And that that level of guidance is preventing them from learning critical thinking skills for themselves?

Respondent E: Yeah, I think it's part of what — well, you know, like, I have not really thought too much about the consequences other than for the teachers as being like, 'Fuck,' you know. I think, what we are thinking is, that it's dumbing down, that we don't get the students to be as independently thinking as they could or should be. That we [universities] are now missing out on that top end, brilliant kids because they can't bear it. You know, like, I am thinking of my son now, you know, who just suffocates under the sort of — I feel that suffocation, you know? When I was at school, you know, *fuck*, I just could not *wait* to go to university where I would not have to put up with it anymore and I didn't.

And then here are these — mostly boys — going to university going like, 'Fuck, it's just like school! I thought I was going to be free! I thought I was going to be in charge now! But no, I'm not, I've gotta do this, and then I've gotta do that, I've gotta do this, then I've gotta do that. And then I've got to write a fucking personal reflection on, blah blah blah,' You know? Sort of, well, 'just *teach* me some Foucault, don't *subject* me to him⁴⁴.'

Respondent E

In this interview, Respondent E refers not only to the feminisation of the university, but also the infantilisation of students. This same respondent asked me once where "all

⁴⁴ I think here the respondent was referring to Foucault's governmentality, implying that universities were being too controlling - ie. teach me about Foucault, don't subject me to the conditions that he wrote about.

the bright young things” had disappeared to — because they certainly weren’t doing PhDs anymore. I asked him who he meant by “bright young things” and he replied that he was referring to the younger versions of himself, as a WASP (White, Anglo Saxon Protestant), because young WASPs didn’t do PhDs anymore, PhD positions were predominantly being offered to female students because of diversity issues, and international students because of the money they brought in to the university. There was no mention of the fact that, at IVU, based in Vietnam, it would be the WASPs that would actually *be* the international students — perhaps this was not part of the way he saw the world.

But more than that, he questioned why the “bright young things” would even want to be in a university environment these days, given that they were treated like babies and spoon-fed their education. By equating female academics to “mothers” who preferred a “nurturing approach” and wanted to keep their students tied “to the mother’s apron strings”, he implied that female academics were denying students — or more specifically, male students — their entitlement to the natural, traditional progression from young prince who can do no wrong, to real man who can consider himself equal to his father’s generation of men because he has been through the same set of trials and tribulations.

Professor of Higher Education Jill Blackmore (2017) points out that the feminisation of the university is not only about increasing numbers of female academics, or a greater emphasis on what may be considered “feminine values” — it is also about the increase of women in leadership positions, and the perception that women’s’ style of management is “soft” and service-oriented⁴⁵. In a study of Australian universities, Blackmore determined that even with more women in leadership roles in universities, the underlying institutional structures, processes and cultures also needed to be addressed in order to achieve meaningful equity. At IVU, the three top leadership positions were held by women while I was there, despite the significant paucity of female academics on campus. This provoked many discussions with both male and

⁴⁵ An additional way that Blackmore discusses the feminisation of academia is in relation to mass casualisation - women outnumber men as casual academics, leaving them more vulnerable to the vagaries of the neoliberal higher education market. This was not something I observed at IVU, who employ very few part time or casual staff, except in their English teaching department, which I was told was in line with the English teaching industry in Vietnam.

female participants about women in leadership and how their leadership style trickled down through the rest of the university. The same respondent I mentioned earlier, Respondent E, in the same conversation, reflected this conflict over masculinities and emasculation in universities with anxieties about feminisation:

Jodie: So, do you think the assignments, other than personal reflections, which would be a newer form of assessment to some extent, but, do you think there is *more* assessment, is that what you mean by — ?

Respondent E: — Yeah, there is more and more and more assessment. Yeah.

Jodie: That sounds like a rationalisation of education and from what you were saying earlier, rationalisation was more of a masculine —

Respondent E: — Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah, I understand the contradiction there. I thought of that myself. I thought, you know, how does that work? How does that work if we are thinking of it in terms of the onward sweep of managerialism and rationality that they have, at the same time, the development of, you know, sort of the nurturing university let's call it. How do those two work hand in glove with one another? And I *can* actually square that at the moment, and again, this is potentially unpalatable. And I think we have discussed this before, but it's through the notion of 'the good girl'. The good girl has done *really* well in universities and what she does is, she does what she is told. She does it really well too. And doesn't — despite personal reflection doesn't actually reflect on it, just does it, and does it really well.

And that's what I was sort of, half looking for amongst those two girls⁴⁶ is, you know, which ones got a bit of bolshiness in her, you know, which ones going to be the one who is going to sort of stand up and sort of say, 'Actually, I think we should do it differently,' whereas you know, as opposed to which one sort of says, 'You set me the goals and I'll bloody exceed them.' And I think that's how I would square it up, is that, you've got the ones who have succeeded and not the ones who are going to be especially reflective on the university.

And I sort of feel that, you know, that girls — like, that [one of the 3 senior managers] is trying to — I mean, even my friend [female coauthor], you know, she just sort of goes "ugh" [rolls eyes] if I've — if I actually start talking university politics. Even [female political science academic] does that. So, that's the only way I can square it, just to sort of say that,

⁴⁶ I had sat in on two interviews with potential scholarship candidates, both female, earlier that day. The interviews were conducted over Skype as the candidates were in Hanoi. The panel was my male respondent and another male senior academic as well as a Vietnamese female administrator to take notes. I (along with the other female in the room) was not visible to the candidates.

you know, there hasn't been that critique of the university from that area. And they follow the rules and they've done really well following the rules because they're bloody clever and they are *dutiful* and that gets into the Walkerdine stuff, you know, of 'the dutiful girl'⁴⁷. And so, they are dutiful. Not all girls are like this, by the way. So, you know, we are talking in generalities here and I — but, you know — and of course the ones who do get ahead in these universities, *ipso facto*, are the good girls, you know?

Respondent E

For Respondent E, “good girls” (in the case of IVU, this meaning the senior female leaders) epitomised what was wrong with the modern university — they lacked creativity, took a cookie-cutter approach, did what neoliberalism expected of them without question or concern, and focused on *feelings* as a reflective tool, rather than logic. He characterised them as “always colouring between the lines”. Another respondent (Respondent F — also male) said “It's like the opposite of a boy's club. Well, you've seen how hierarchy works here.” He hastened to assure me that he was not sexist, however. “I know saying words about powerful women makes you sound sexist, but it's not that they're *women*, it's that they are just, in my opinion, genuinely not nice people, not good people. They're the kind of people who would do anything to you to get or keep their power.”

What these two comments have in common is a belief, and perhaps a fear, that IVU was in the hands of people who did not prioritise the academic pursuits that “real” academics value, and that this was directly according to Respondent E, and indirectly according to Respondent E, due to the gender of the leaders in charge. This, I would argue however, was an unexpected twist for many of the Western men who had been attracted to IVU in part for its location — Vietnam — and the perks that this implied.

Conclusion

Universities have traditionally been predominantly masculine spaces, and proponents of neoliberalism in universities often cite the neoliberal turn as a driver towards greater equity and accessibility in academia. While I do not argue against this, I concur with authors such as Bagilhole and White (2013) who have claimed that

⁴⁷ Here the respondent is referring to previous conversations we had had about the work of critical psychology and feminist studies scholar Valerie Walkerdine (2006), whose work he had drawn on in his own research.

although neoliberalism and its familiar, New Managerialism, appear as if they would create more of a meritocracy in which women would be evaluated based on their abilities rather than their gender, these evaluation processes are still highly masculine. They point out that women often wait until after they have finished having or even raising their children to complete their PhDs, and often hesitate to move from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor because of the hostility they experience when they attempt to get promoted. Many women who do get promoted, they argue, then get accused of being soft, and contributing to the feminization of academia. I concur with these perspectives of the neoliberal university this by providing an alternative perspective, demonstrating how a focus on marketable authenticity in this context both allows and encourages men to privilege other men who uphold white masculinity as the dominant construct in the space, while simultaneously restricting, constraining, and even punishing women and men who do not adhere to this way of thinking.

As has been discussed, Orientalism usually refers to a Western male and an exoticised feminine “other” (Fechter, 2007), and as this chapter demonstrates, this certainly occurred during my fieldwork. But sexism and misogyny towards women from all nations was very common, much more than I’ve observed in universities in Australia. The Orient itself is often described (in the literature, by men) as “passive and female, prone to the masculine penetration of the West” (Manderson & Jolly, 1997, p. 7). In this chapter I’ve argued that IBCs in developing countries have the potential to attract men who view “the East” as a place where support of patriarchal dominance is still the norm, where they are “still” entitled to hold those ideologies, compared to in their home countries where the gathering forces of #MeToo and #TimesUp are causing them to feel like victims of persecution if they express their patriarchal beliefs openly. However, even for those men who do not consciously hold patriarchal beliefs upon arrival, the IVU environment in which they are highly valued for their white-maleness can *create* a sense of entitlement to being at the top of the patriarchal order, and to receiving the perks and privileges that come with that.

Again, I do not wish to imply with this chapter that every man, or even every white man, at IVU conformed to the above depictions. In fact, the key move of this chapter is to point out that misogyny is a behaviour, not directly tied to a personality. Not only can

one adopt these behaviours increasingly over time, but one can also behave misogynistically during a one-off occasion, or only in certain contexts, or not at all. And while these trends have a tendency to be divided along gender lines, these lines and tendencies are fluid and fuzzy. Further, I'm not arguing that sexism or misogyny at a university is a new phenomenon. But I am arguing that in an extreme neoliberal, globalised environment like an IBC, where the employer places such great emphasis on white-maleness as a commodity to be valued, hoarded and exploited, that a sense of entitlement and ensuing misogynistic behaviours are an anticipatable result. That this was indeed the result that has occurred at IVU was something that was often remarked upon to me by women at this field site, as well as by men on occasion when they chose not to conform, or admitted to me privately that they were uncomfortable in doing so.

In the next chapter, I will explore the effect that the focus on marketable authenticity on this IBC has had on professional identities and notions of professionalism, unpacking the various ways that different groups and individuals at IVU "market" their academic authenticity to each other.

Finally, just in case you were wondering – the female Vietnamese professor from this chapter's opening vignette has *not*, to this point in time, taken up a position at IVU. I'll leave you to speculate as to why this may be so.

Chapter 5: Professionalism at Work

Adapted⁴⁸ from the IVU Code of Conduct

Section 2: Behaving Professionally

2.1. Staff are expected to carry out their work duties in a professional and conscientious manner **at all times** by:

2.1.1. Behaving in accordance with **IVU's values**.

2.1.2. Behaving in accordance with **relevant University policies**, contractual obligations or agreements and legislation,

2.1.3. Behaving **ethically** and taking action to prevent unethical practices.

2.1.4. **Maintaining confidentiality of IVU information** which the reasonable person would consider confidential.

2.1.5. Seeking to attain **the highest possible standards of performance** and providing accurate, timely and useful information to colleagues and students.

2.1.6. Ensuring **any public comments made in the University's name are authorised and in accordance with IVU's Brand and engagement policy**.

2.1.7. Responsibly **controlling the use of substances** that could adversely affect behaviour or performance in line with IVU's Health, safety and wellbeing policy.

2.1.8. Reporting fraud or **corrupt conduct** to appropriate internal or external authorities

2.1.9. **Dressing and maintaining an appearance in accordance with standards appropriate to the duties undertaken and the responsibilities held**.

2.1.10. **Conducting activities in a manner that supports health, safety and wellbeing for all affected members of the IVU community**.

2.1.11. **Refraining from acting in any way that would unfairly harm the reputation of the University**.

⁴⁸ The only thing that has been changed is the name of the university

Introduction

Academic professionalism, an area of research attracting increasing attention, is a key aspect of the mantle that academics wear — part of the “rules of the game”, as Bourdieu might put it (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989, pp. 24-25). Professionalism relates to how knowledge is used as a resource made available through social capital and shared and applied amongst an interrelated and discrete group of people (and in my argument, things). This group has identifiable boundaries, as the members therein possess the competence, expertise and capacity to represent that knowledge within the group and beyond it (Kolsaker, 2008). Furthermore, the members of that bounded group make the decisions about what competence, expertise and capacity look like in this group and field. In the academic profession, these competencies have traditionally related to passion and expertise in education, ability to work with a high level of autonomy, competency in generating new knowledge, the application of logic, use of evidence, conceptual and theoretical rigour and the disinterested pursuit of truth (Kolsaker, 2008).

However, these traditional notions of academic professionalism have been, to some extent and in some contexts, superseded by managerial tendencies and the neoliberalisation of universities. Now, academic professional identities may be said to have fragmented to make themselves more accountable to the managerial gaze (Abramov, Gruzdev, & Terentyev, 2016). Bourdieu, in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, describes this struggle (specifically concerning writers and artists) as one for the right to decide what defines the boundaries of the field:

The field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer...the fundamental stake in literary struggles is...the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorised to call themselves writers... (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42).

Let us explore the notion of academic professionalism using Bourdieu’s field theory for a moment then (Bourdieu, 1993). As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, within any “field” (such as higher education), there are “elites” (Bourdieu, 1984) who interpret and legitimate the various practices and representations made within the field by the agents of the field. But any field is also marked by struggles that constantly modify these internal power balances, as the various agents battle for the power to interpret the field in a way most

beneficial to them. From this, we could infer that the elites of neoliberal higher education — the managers of academics — are struggling to change the meaning of academic professionalism to something that can be better wrangled by a non-academic manager. In this way, they can turn it into something understandable and manageable and relatable by a broader “audience” — such as a KPI (key performance indicator). This could be seen as a form of translation, but in the process of translating, the traditional meanings of academic professionalism get lost, emptied out.

Because the “population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the [academic]” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42) has now grown to include academic managers who are not necessarily academics themselves, academia has moved into an era where academic professionalism and academic values do not necessarily align. Therefore, Edward Said (1994), in the Reith Lectures and then in the book that followed, claims that professionalism as an intellectual is the key thing to strive *against*:

By professionalism, I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behavior— not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and ‘objective.’ (Said, 1994, p. 74)

In this chapter, I argue that most academics at IVU have been very deeply enrolled in the production of marketable authenticity networks for the university, and are indeed, as Said describes it, aiming to be seen as professionals while keeping one eye on the clock. However, just as prestige is created via a collaboration between internal and external actors (see Chapter 2), professionalism, too, is not something that can be produced by an individual but must also be conferred by a social group. In *Representations of the Intellectual* (the book of Said’s 1993 Reith Lectures), Said quotes Sartre in describing the collaborative process of making a writer into a writer:

I am an author, first of all, by my free intention to write. But at once it follows that I become a man whom other men consider as a writer, that is, who has to respond to a certain demand and who has been invested with a certain social function. Whatever game he may want to play, he must play it on the basis of the representation which others have of him. (Sartre, 1947, in Said, 1994, p. 74).

I argue that what is true of Sartre as a writer is also true of an academic — that what makes an academic into an academic is (a) that they look and behave like an academic and perform academic duties, but (b) that the population of individuals entitled to define an academic *agree* that these are academic appearances, behaviours and duties. Thus, academic professionalism in the neoliberal university comes to be defined as the appearances, behaviours and duties that academic managers — those elites with the power to interpret, define and legitimate — agree are the appropriate appearances, behaviours and duties for an academic. And what is deemed appropriate to academic managers are the appearances, behaviours and duties that are most legible, most easily quantified, and most easily *marketed* to external stakeholders.

This chapter explores the way in which the forces of globalisation and neoliberalisation shape the “ideal” academic employee. They do this by creating a marketably authentic academic based on the norms and expectations of whatever collaborative processes are in place at a specific university (in this case, IVU). As has been argued in previous chapters, in a global, marketised and commodity-driven higher education sector, academics are not only selling their abilities in teaching, research and service to their employing university. They are also selling other things — their whiteness, for example, their maleness, and as I will show in this chapter, a marketable form of academic professionalism. Academic professionalism serves the dual purpose of producing (papers, graduates etc.) for the university, while also not making more work for those who manage academics. As can be inferred from the IVU Code of Conduct at the beginning of this chapter, if an academic is producing research, teaching and service, but not professionalism, then the additional work this creates for the university may cancel out an academic’s other work. The problem with this in a global academic market, as my ethnographic research shows, is that professionalism can be extremely difficult to maintain in the early days of moving to a new country. Building a new life, in a new country, in a new academic setting, and without any of the familiar trappings of academia from one’s home country, takes time. It also takes work, and this work is often mostly invisible to university employers, and sometimes even to the academics themselves who are too busy trying to survive to be reflexive about their experience.

Therefore, in this chapter I first argue that professionalism is a capitalist good that can be produced and sold by academics to their employing university in exchange for a wage, thus allowing IVU to onsell this professionalism as a proxy indicator of quality to prospective

parents and students. I posit that to produce professionalism effectively, an academic must undertake four particular forms of self-management: emotional regulation; productivity; competence; and service with authority. I will then demonstrate the additional work that goes into producing professionalism in an academic's early days of arriving at IVU, introducing the term "concealment work" to describe this phenomenon. Concealment work is the work an academic must do in the extreme case of having arrived at a new university in an unfamiliar national and cultural context, and thus having to conceal the chaos they are experiencing (from their employer, their colleagues, and sometimes even from themselves) in order to produce at least a façade of professionalism. Finally, to explore the outcomes of effective versus ineffective concealment work, I will juxtapose two case studies — Chris and Jae, two academics in their first 12 months at IVU, who have conducted concealment work with varying results.

Marketing Professionalism

As I did in Chapter 3 in regard to whiteness, in this chapter, I argue that producing professionalism in a certain way creates a resource that academics can sell to IVU in exchange for their salary. IVU, in turn, can then market these displays of professionalism that they have purchased to prospective students and parents (as well as the government and other external stakeholders), as indicators of the quality of IVU's educational offering.

In the definition of academic professionalism that I am putting forth, there are four key tasks that academics must successfully undertake to be seen as professional by both their peers and "the elites" with the power to assess their performance. In this section, I will outline each of these with examples from the field.

Emotional Regulation

In any white collar working environment, there is a level of emotional regulation required; that is to say, the enhancement of positive emotions and the reduction of emotions likely to have a negative impact on others (Diefendorff, Richard, & Croyle, 2006). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) have argued that there is a strong interrelationship between professional identity and the burden of emotional labour. In establishing this relationship, particularly regarding customer-service roles, they explain:

A customer-contact role carries certain normative expectations, including display rules. The more strongly one identifies with the role, the greater the positive impact that fulfilling those expectations has on one's psychological well-being. Emotional labour provides an opportunity to 'act out' (Cheney, 1983: 346) one's identification, that is, to express one's fidelity to the valued identity....this emotional labour constitutes an identity-relevant experience, specifically an identity-enhancing one...if one has assumed an identity whose normative expectations are contrary to those in the customer-contact role, then emotional labour will have a negative impact on one's well-being. Although this constitutes an identity-*relevant* experience, it is 'identity-*threatening*'. (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, pp. 99-100, my emphasis)

Academics have been found to strongly identify with their vocation — academia — rather than their organisation. So, if the organisation is asking them to conform to role expectations and display rules that are in conflict with the role expectations and conflict that their occupational identity would suggest, then they are more likely to “experience emotive dissonance and self-alienation,” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p. 99).

The normative standards of emotional display and concealment tend to be fairly consistent: to put it simply, they involve remaining calm, and not making trouble. What “remaining calm, and not making trouble” constitutes across different contexts and cultures, however, is not always immediately obvious. Therefore, to ensure new employees at IVU are clear about “the way things are done around here”, IVU's HR department runs a 3-hour orientation presentation to demonstrate what constitutes “remaining calm” and what could constitute “making trouble”. I attended one of these when I first began my fieldwork at IVU, both to observe, and as a requirement of my entering the field.

The seminar I attended, held for the 32 newcomers that had also started at IVU that March, was presented in the university's 500-seat lecture hall, with the presenters holding a microphone and striding up and down the red-carpeted stage. The presentation began with an exposition about IVU's Code of Conduct: “The most important part of today's seminar.” The presenter, a Vietnamese HR representative, explained that the Code of Conduct is “the common-sense way that people should behave at IVU”, and then warned her audience, “I don't want to scare you, but once you've heard these and signed the attendance sheet, you can no longer claim ignorance.” A series of university values were flashed up onto the two-storey high projector screen, such as Passion (example given: when you're willing to stay late to get a job done), Courage (“...but keep in mind that there is a difference between having courage and

taking unnecessary risks,”), and Agility (“Like, if you get an email from your manager asking you to change your plans, you can quickly be flexible”).

A new slide flashed up on the screen with the words "Work/Life Balance" emblazoned across it. "Ah yes, this is an important one," said the presenter. "Can anyone tell me what this means? Give me an example?" The audience was silent. "No-one? Ok, I'll give you an example. What are we here for? To work? Or to gossip about our lives? You shouldn't be bringing your personal issues into work because... who cares?? I mean, we have to still be caring, but actually, don't always be talking about your personal life because, really, who cares!?? That's what work-life balance means."

As each new employee enters the IVU world, they are made rapidly aware of what will constitute "making trouble" in this new environment: breaking the code of conduct; stopping work for the day before a task is finished; taking risks; not doing what your manager tells you to do quickly enough; or bringing your personal life into the office, as just some of the examples provided. This last one can be particularly problematic for new academics who are often overwhelmed with the tasks of settling into their new life within the first 3 months in Vietnam. However, it is essential that they do 'successfully enhance positive emotions and reduce emotions likely to have a negative impact on others' (Diefendorff et al., 2006) during this time, as they are aware that they will be assessed at the 10-week mark to determine whether they have passed probation.

Productivity

As academic work “intensifies” under the audit culture of neoliberalism (Ogbonna & Harris, 2004), academics are increasingly likely to be required to meet productivity targets or KPIs related to their teaching, research and service. Teaching loads and division of labour was a hot topic while I was on fieldwork, as a new workload plan had been introduced just before my arrival and this was about to be changed again just as I was leaving. Most academics at IVU were teaching three semesters a year, with a minimum of 12 teaching hours per week (although I shadowed one academic who had been doing 24 teaching hours a week as a favour to his manager, who he hoped would return the favour at a later point — the academic resigned, however, before this could occur). Each hour of teaching attracted a corresponding hour of preparation time per week. In addition, for each student that they taught (usually 30

per class over four classes, so approximately 120 students), they were allocated one hour of marking per semester, and 15 minutes of consultation time per semester.

To break this down, an average academic 40-hour working week at IVU should (assuming there were no coordination duties incorporated) consist of:

- 12 hours of face-to-face teaching time
- 12 hours of corresponding preparation time
- 8 hours of marking (although I was informed that it's best to reserve these hours for peak marking times like when assignments come in or during the exam period), and
- 2 hours of consultation time, including all face-to-face consultations as well as time spent responding to student emails (although I was regularly told that this was practically impossible, as Vietnamese students are highly dependent on their teachers for direction).
- 6 hours to be used on a combination of service tasks and research.

Service tasks were sometimes specified and agreed upon with the academic's line manager at the start of the semester (although additional tasks often arose as the semester progressed). These tasks included things like being the staff facilitator for a student club; coordinating a research community of interest for other staff; or leading or participating in projects for the Department of Learning and Teaching. Service also included mandatory tasks such as attending regular course-level, department-level, centre-level, campus-level, and inter-campus staff meetings; participating in the marketing and student recruitment activities of the department and university; and attending annual student-related events outside of normal working hours each semester, such as the Teachers Day Ceremony and Graduation celebrations.

Naturally, the result of this combination of high teaching hours and extensive service work was that research time, as it seems to be in universities the world over, got relegated to evenings, weekends and holidays. However, one key difference between IVU and many other universities is that IVU's trimester system negates the possibility of also doing big chunks of research during teaching breaks. Yet the feat had to be managed. It was widely acknowledged that having a research track record was perhaps the most important indicator of professional success, not just at IVU but globally throughout the higher education sector. Without this, staff

knew, it would be almost impossible to progress one's academic career (McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006), as they would never be classed as true academic professionals.

Head of Department Simon described this process to me in an interview in his office:

Jodie: What do you think are the pressures on the academics here, not just in your department, but also at IVU?

Simon: I don't think many are used to our workload model. So, the new workload model I think would have shaken up a few people. That's because I think they were left to operate for some time without any defined workload model. So, based on that there is pressure now to teach, to teach well or to teach based on some kind of learning and teaching model. The other one is to perform research. I think in the past there wasn't any pressure to do research. If you are a good teacher, you stay a good teacher, now you've got to do a bit of both. And added to that is also service and leadership.

Jodie: Which, as you've said, takes up a large chunk of time.

Simon: Yeah, huge, huge amount of time. So, there's — yeah, there's those pressures. They are the internal pressures, but you know as an academic you always have external pressures. In our area for example, and in other areas too, there is always that extra notion of accreditation. So, it's not just the university KPIs that you've got to meet. You've got to meet your accreditation requirements. So, there is the external pressure as well. So, yeah, all that, I think, is some pressure for the academics.

Simon — Head of Department, white, male, late-40s

Thus, productivity is a key component of achieving professionalism. The outputs of productivity (the teaching that got done; the research that got published; and the emails that got answered, the research communities and student clubs that got facilitated, the papers that got reviewed, the meetings that got attended, the projects that were undertaken and the attendance of marketing events that happened as part of meeting service KPIs) are in fact part of the substantive, visible, codified work of an academic. However, the element that contributes to professionalism is the background work that goes into producing this volume of outputs. Without that effort and work, that productivity, the outputs are never put out, and the KPIs cannot be achieved. Of course, every university knows that the outputs that are linked to the KPIs are the result of an enormous amount of productivity on behalf of their staff — nobody imagines that papers write themselves! But by measuring the outputs, and not the effort that went into producing them, IVU simultaneously conveys that this effort is of lesser

value, while also expecting it as a matter of course. In other words, “we don’t care how you get it done — but you will get it done.”

Competence

It is not enough to produce *enough*. Academics must produce work that is also *good* enough in all three of their substantive work areas — teaching, research and service — if they are to be seen as professional. In fact, professionalism and competence have been closely linked in research on educational institutions, to the point of being seen as almost synonymous (Svensson, 2006). Competence in higher education is usually measured in a quasi-quantitative manner (Strathern, 2000); for example, students’ ratings of their professor’s competence as an educator, based against qualitative descriptors, or the ranking of the journal in which an academic has published, as a proxy indicator for the qualitative value of that journal (Fanghanel, 2012). In this way, although degree or type of competence is a qualitative judgement, it can be effectively tied to productivity to enmesh notions of professionalism and audit culture further together.

The members of the President’s Executive at IVU were well aware of the impossibility of completing all of the academic KPIs to a high level of competence within a 40-hour working week; as Wesley, a member of the Senior Executive team, told me:

No one who is a successful academic — which means you are research active, you supervise PhD students, you’ve won teaching awards, you’ve got large research grants — no one who has that type of CV has achieved it between nine and five. You know, it takes years of late nights, early mornings, weekends, to really make it in academia.

Wesley — President’s Executive, white, male, early 50s

Wesley had been an academic prior to his move into academic management, and had made it clear that he had succeeded as a “real” academic while also raising children as a single father, thus feeling highly qualified to judge his staff on their level of commitment to the academy. Later in this same discussion, however, I asked Wesley what he felt the challenges were to foreign academics at IVU, and he gave me an extensive list. He identified the difficulties of not having a research community to connect with in Vietnam, meaning many of the faculty lacked academic support networks as their research didn’t correspond with that of any of the other IVU staff. He mentioned the difficulty of raising (and affording the education of) foreign children in Vietnam. He discussed his staff’s struggles to find a balance socially when the only people you ever spend time with are your colleagues. And he pointed to the

fear that foreign academics have of losing their job at IVU because if they do, they will have to leave Vietnam — a particular difficulty if they have acquired a Vietnamese family during their time in the country. Yet despite being very much aware of the additional pressures expatriation had placed on his academic staff, he still considered their complaints about workload unprofessional, because professionals produce voluminous outputs, to a high standard, without making trouble.

Service with authority

The foundational text on emotional labour, *The Managed Heart* (Hochschild, 1983/2012), describes the various levels of emotional performance that service employees such as airline attendants must undertake in order to do their jobs successfully, essentially alienating themselves from their own emotions by selling these to their employers in exchange for a wage. Organisational psychologist Sharmin Tunguz (2016) adapts this notion for the academy, using the term “service with authority” to describe the way that a lecturer, specifically, is required to regulate their emotions in order to keep the customers (their students) happy, while also conveying a sense of intellectual dignity and maintaining (at least a facade of) power and authority. I would argue that this extends beyond relationships with students into the relationships academics have with each other, and with their superiors. This is because although the students are the explicit “customer” in this context, academics are still “selling” themselves to their employers in exchange for a wage, and to their colleagues in exchange for respect and acceptance. Thus, a range of what Tunguz and others (eg. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) have called “display rules” are still in play for academics, even when the transaction between academic and receiving stakeholder is not monetary.

The balancing act of determining and then following the display rules, without losing one's sense of self, requires a lot of work and effort, as well as the production of a wide array of emotions. For example, Tunguz claims that in some situations, the lecturer must produce warm, positive emotions, otherwise known as integrative emotions, that will draw the students in. Mina, a Finance lecturer from Ukraine in her mid-30s, felt this to be her area of specialty in the classroom, claiming that, “this is part of my personality. Even I have the feeling of motherhood, to my students. Sometimes I feel that they are my babies, my kids. I try to care about them.” She had, however, found this level of emotion to be problematic and inappropriate at other times, particularly with her colleagues in the Finance program which was quite heavily male-dominated. She likened the need to manage her emotions with her

colleagues at IVU to an early time in her career when she had been working as an accountant in a large manufacturing firm:

Mina: When I was around twenty-two years old, I started to work in a large manufacturer, and I was responsible to somehow control and supervise around two hundred labourers. And I was a young girl. And it's very difficult and challenging to manage or control the labourers who are, for example, at least they have five years or ten years work experience. That's why I had to manage my behaviour, and stop my feminine emotion and feeling, at least when I am in the working hours. At the beginning it was difficult, but later on, it became like a habit for me, and it was quite a successful duration for me. But you know, in that stage, the output of the labourer — I mean the output of the performance was not my responsibility. It was not related to me.

Jodie: Okay.

Mina: The process was related to me.

Jodie: But not the outcome?

Mina: Not the outcome and the level of their performance. But in teaching and PhD supervision, the performance is part of my responsibility. So, the level of responsibility is much more higher. Any mistake that the student does, it's my responsibility to manage and solve that. That's why it's a bigger responsibility, and that's why it's more challenging. And more nerve-wracking. Yeah.

Mina — lecturer, white, mid-30s, female

In other situations, Tunguz (2016) claims, neutral but firm emotions must be produced, particularly when discipline is required. I observed this when sitting in on a plagiarism hearing on one occasion⁴⁹. The academic I was observing, Tara, the Communications lecturer introduced in Chapter 1, suggested I should observe one of the ubiquitous plagiarism hearings that every academic at IVU seemed to conduct at the end of every assessment period. Plagiarism was a major problem on campus, and even with the mandatory use of plagiarism-checking software Turnitin in every course, students were still plagiarising for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from a stated lack of interest in doing the work through to a complete lack of understanding of what plagiarism was. The hearing I sat in on was with one of the latter cases. Tara invited the student, a young man in his first semester at IVU, into one of the small meeting rooms and asked him if he knew why he was there. He shook his head no. She pulled

⁴⁹ The student gave express permission for me to be there.

his assignment up on Turnitin on her laptop, pointing out to him the many places throughout his assignment that had been copied from other sources without attribution. He nodded along, still looking confused. “Tin, do you see now what you’ve done wrong?” Tara asked. Again, Tin shook his head. Very calmly, and with a completely neutral face, Tara explained more explicitly. “Well, you’ve copied from all these other people Tin. This isn’t your own work. That’s completely unacceptable. IVU doesn’t allow that; it’s in your diary, it’s one of the student regulations. If you want to refer to the work of other people, you need to paraphrase and then provide an in-text citation. Otherwise, it’s cheating.” “No!” said Tin, appearing shocked and offended. “It’s not cheating! Those people are experts. They said it better than I ever could. Why would I try to paraphrase what they said? That’s disrespectful.” Tara blinked at the student for a moment, clearly surprised by this logic. Then she nodded and very calmly walked him through a brief “how to” on academic referencing. At no time throughout this interaction did Tara give any hint of her own emotions. After Tin left and closed the door, she turned to me, eyes wide, looking thoroughly bemused. “I nearly laughed out loud when he said that!” she said, lips compressed with amusement. “That’s terrible, isn’t it. I wasn’t laughing at him, I promise, but I’ve just never heard such a logical explanation for plagiarism before! I’m glad I didn’t go in too hard at the beginning, poor guy. I hope he gets it for next time.”

A third example that Tunguz (2016) gives for emotions that need to be manufactured and managed are negative or differentiating emotions, giving the example of when lecturers must give “stern warnings when enforcing assignment deadlines” (p. 6). As she points out earlier in the paper, Tunguz is not arguing that genuine anger in itself is necessarily a form of emotional labour. However, if it needs to be manufactured to produce a specific effect, then this manufacturing of negative emotions can become a form of emotional labour. For example, I was sitting in the Calmette Cafe one afternoon when one of my key informants, Sam came in. I was surprised to see him there — he wasn’t a huge fan of the staff cafe, and also, I knew he was supposed to be in class. “I just gave them a right serve and told them to bugger off,” he told me. “No, I didn’t really, but I did dismiss them early after giving them a good telling off. It’s Week 10 [of 12], and not one, *not one* had done the homework I set last lesson. So I gave them the standard rant about how I don’t talk just to hear the sound of my own voice, and it’s their education, not mine, but that I wasn’t going to waste my time teaching them if they were going to waste my time by not bothering to even come prepared. Then I packed up my stuff, gave them a significant look, said ‘I’d do the homework now if I were you,’ and walked out of

the room. They only had 20 minutes left of the class anyway, so I'm not too fussed that I didn't get to finish the lesson, but I think I made my point. They looked shellshocked." He chuckled, then shrugged his shoulders a few times, as if loosening them up. "Phoo! Alright, shaking that shit off and getting myself a coffee!"

While manufacturing negative emotions can create residual feelings that then need to be "shaken off", it was more common at IVU to see academics experiencing negative emotions but having to suppress them for the sake of professionalism. Frustrations over conflicts with colleagues, confusion with the different cultural norms in Vietnam, exasperation with the technological systems and processes in place all contributed to negative feelings that it would not have been appropriate to express in the workplace. In this way, IVU is no different from any other professional workplace, but these feelings seemed to contribute to the burden of undertaking emotional labour that was specific to academia.

I argue that conducting service with authority is a key component of academic professionalism in a neoliberal university like IVU, as a lecturer's successful and balanced relationship with students (and colleagues) is critical to achieving the KPI of an 80% "Good Teaching Score" (or GTS as it's commonly referred to at IVU) in the end-of-semester student evaluations. If an academic does not achieve this KPI, I was told, they must undergo "peer observations" the following semester by a "critical friend" — usually their line manager under tutelage from the university's Teaching and Learning team — who will then determine what further resources may be necessary to bring the lecturer up to the professional standards required. If an academic did, however, manage to manufacture and manage the appropriate emotions, produce enough outputs at a high enough standard, and provide the stakeholders around them with the appropriate level of service with authority, this would go a very long way to them being perceived as a professional, usually with positive results, as the next section will discuss.

The work of concealing chaos

As previously discussed, there are problems with the idea that International Branch Campuses, specifically, require their newly arrived academics to immediately produce professionalism. Moving across institutional and national borders can cause a significant period of destabilisation and disorientation, and sometimes even pain for an academic (Walkerdine, 2006). I would argue that this is due to a disassembling and restructuring of the

academic as a network rather than as a bounded human entity. If humans — academics in this case — were entirely bounded entities, then it would be a simple thing to pluck one from his or her existing academic context and plop them down in a new one with few consequences. Anthropologist Liisa Malkki, in her 1992 article about the displacement of refugees, suggests that this is entirely possible in the case of “privileged” mobility, using the metaphor of roots to make her argument:

That displacement is subject to botanical thought is evident from the contrast between two everyday terms for it: transplantation and uprootedness. The notion of transplantation is less specific a term than the latter, but it may be agreed that it generally evokes live, viable roots. It strongly suggests, for example, the colonial and postcolonial, usually privileged category of ‘expatriates’ who pick up their roots in an orderly manner from the ‘mother country’, the originative culture-bed, and set about their ‘acclimatization’ in the ‘foreign environment’ or on ‘foreign soil’ — again, in an orderly manner. (Malkki, 1992, p. 62)

I have spent the majority of this thesis so far trying to persuade the reader that expatriating as an academic is not an “orderly” experience. However, even if one accepted Malkki’s premise, and could agree that the mobility of privileged elites (such as academics) is orderly, then this would still be acknowledging the idea that humans put down metaphorical “roots” and that these roots may bind us to a particular place, certain people, and specific ideas. To “transplant” oneself from these specificities to new ones would still be more than the minor inconvenience Malkki implies with her description. I would go even further than this, however, to argue that an academic is an assemblage being constantly enacted into being by multiple actants and that some of those actants are location-specific. When you mobilise the fleshy, bounded human form to a new location, not all of the actants in an academic assemblage will wish or be able to come along and continue the work they’ve been doing to create this academic network, because, unlike roots to a plant, they are not immutably fused with the rest of the network. Extended family members, friends, colleagues, students, heavy academic books, cultural artefacts relevant to the academic identity (such as a beautiful antique writing desk that one academic showed me a photo of, as he had not been able to afford to ship it to Vietnam) — a wide variety of actants that had helped to support and stabilise an individual’s academic network may have been left behind. There is very little that is “orderly” about this process.

Thus, the academic assemblage can descend into a period of significant destabilisation. Sociologist Arthur Frank (1995), in his writing about both cancer and Holocaust survivors,

describes this period that can occur after a major life disruption, and the ways that people talk about that period or are unable to talk about it, as a “chaos narrative” (p. 97). He argues that when a person is experiencing and expressing chaos, he or she is dwelling within an “anti-narrative” state that does not conform to modernist storytelling norms of cause and effect. It is, simply put, a person’s unmade world, often illogical, irrational, laid bare and made vulnerable, but upon which a new world must somehow be built. Thus, until such a time as the academic network can be successfully [re]produced using a combination of new and existing actants, being enrolled in a variety of new and familiar ways, it will remain destabilised and in a state of chaos.

As Frank points out, however, chaos is the antithesis of the modernist philosophy of constant and progressive improvement and is therefore not to be tolerated in a neoliberal environment such as the modern university. To put this another way: academics are still expected to maintain the professionalism that epitomises the triumph of the modernist university project, even while their worlds are (or feel as if they are) falling apart. Therefore, while the academic’s body and mind are, to varying degrees, ensnared in the impotencies and frustrations of the chaos anti-narrative, there is frequently a part of them that works to maintain the expected facade of professionalism. It is this mutuality of simultaneous ways of being — both in an inner state of chaos and producing the appearance of professionalism — that I am calling “concealment work”.

Concealment work, by its very nature, is difficult to spot, and in fact, I didn’t notice it was happening while I was in the field — it was only after I began analysing my field notes and interviews that I started to detect a trend. In this section, I will explore the cases of two lecturers in their first 12 months at IVU who were undertaking concealment work, with differing levels of success.

Case study 1: Chris — Lost on Campus

The first example of an academic carrying out concealment work comes from a middle-aged American academic, Chris. The day I was with Chris, he seemed to be having a very bad day. I had inadvertently scheduled our day of shadowing for the day after the US elections in November 2016, and the campus was abuzz with the news of the Trump presidency — when it had been announced the day before, several of the US academics at IVU had actually gone home early in considerable distress. Chris was unimpressed by this, telling me over a truly

awful cup of coffee at the Subway beneath the building in which both our respective offices were located that American politics was the one thing he refused to talk about with his new friends here at IVU, because he felt that they were, on the whole, uninformed and highly biased. As we discussed this, his normally jovial and positive disposition darkened, his eyes flashed, and his jaw hardened — his whole face changed. I speculated as the day wore on, as he explained his pro-big-business stance and expressed frustration at his colleagues naiveté about “the way the world works, the way it has to work”, that he had, in fact, voted for Trump himself, and now found himself surrounded predominantly by left-leaning academics strongly opposed to Trump’s purported ideals.

Nonetheless, Chris claimed to have had an excellent introduction to IVU, which was his first experience of working on a university campus. Before his employment in Vietnam, he had done his PhD as a part-time, external student through an American university with a good reputation, while building up a multi-million-dollar export company in Nigeria. Upon leaving his company, he moved to Malaysia to live with his Malaysian wife’s family and worked online for some time as a distance lecturer for a large American university. He described to me how enormously impressed he had been with how kind and helpful his new IVU colleagues had been to him, the support offered by the HR department, his immediate manager, the facilities, his students, and Vietnam in general. He was particularly impressed with IVU’s President, Elizabeth Goffman, whom he kept accidentally calling Margaret and then correcting himself (saying he didn’t know why that kept happening). He hadn’t yet had the pleasure to meet her in person, but he could see that she was running IVU like a business, and treating the students as they deserved to be treated — as valued customers — and that had in fact been one of the key things that had attracted him to IVU in the first place. With a PhD in business and entrepreneurship, and “inspired by Steve Jobs’ philosophy of professionalism in all things”, he believed strongly in the market economy and felt that the neoliberal university model was the way of the future. Chris was aware that his new colleagues — he often referred to them as “his new friends here at IVU” — did not share many of these ideals. But having been a successful entrepreneur in both the US and then Nigeria, he mused that this was “not because they are bad people. I think they just haven’t had as much experience in the real world of business as I have”.

Although he hadn’t met her in person, Chris had seen President Goffman speak on various occasions, at Town Hall meetings held to keep all staff informed of the university’s position on

things, and at flagship lectures, where she often introduced the keynote speaker. While he found her an inspiring figure, he professed himself baffled by the language used at these events, especially due to the number of acronyms used at IVU. “I often feel like my colleagues are speaking another language that *sounds* like English, so sounds like it should make sense to me, but it doesn’t. I sometimes sit through meetings where I haven’t the first idea what’s being talked about. But I don’t feel comfortable interrupting something like a town hall meeting to ask questions that everyone else probably knows the answers to, and I realise that a lot of the jargon is probably Australian (Professor Goffman’s nationality) so... it’s early days, I’m sure I’ll get used to it.” Despite his confusion, he was happy to continue giving IVU the benefit of the doubt, again in part because of the positive corporate culture he had experienced. “I believe, you know, that corporations are, the cultures are a reflection of the CEO or the boss. I believe that Margaret, I mean Elizabeth, must have this terrific attitude towards the culture because everybody here wants to help. It’s really phenomenal. And I think that’s just sensational.”

Chris seemed to point out the positive in everything he talked about — a contrast to most of my more established academic participants at IVU, who, as previously discussed, often used their “war stories” as a means of bonding with other foreigners. However, as upbeat as he appeared, he told me that he had been suffering a lot of anxiety in his first weeks and that he felt it had been affecting his performance. He wasn’t getting a lot of sleep (“I don’t need much anyway”) and had started skipping meals (“the food here is terrific, but I don’t really feel like eating, during the day at least. It’s great, I’ve lost six pounds!”). In the first few weeks, he told me, he kept getting lost on campus and turning up to meetings late, even when he left the office with plenty of time to spare. He told me that he was now finally starting to find his way, but I had noted that we got quite turned around trying to get from his office to Subway to grab coffee that morning, even though Subway was located directly below his office. He had become increasingly agitated as we wound through the building for just under five minutes, trying different staircases and often ending up back where we had started. This happened again when we moved from his office to his first class of the day — all his classes had been timetabled into the same classroom so that he only had one place to find, yet still, we struggled and eventually turned up late to class.

Throughout the day, Chris ran into almost constant obstacles, yet his demeanour remained positive if at times a little strained. He had a new cell phone, but couldn’t remember what password he had given it, so unless someone rang him, he wasn’t currently able to use it. At

one point, his desktop PC froze, his twin monitors showing the “wheel of death” symbol frozen in time. He knew that someone had written down the number for the IT department for him but without his phone to record notes, he'd been writing everything down on sticky notes. Unfortunately, he now couldn't remember what he'd done with the sticky note that had IT's phone number on it (it turned out to have been written on one of the many official-looking documents he had pinned to his grey, carpet-lined cubicle, and not on a sticky note at all). To my own personal disappointment, when lunchtime rolled around, he told me that he doesn't eat lunch on his teaching days as he is “a bit too hyped up to enjoy it”, and I could certainly attest to the anxious energy he had been carrying with him throughout the morning.

Chris's confusion seemed to peak during his afternoon class. This class was focused on how to research for the first assignment. He asked the students to pick a country, and they would all do research on that country together on the projector. A student picked Australia. Chris went to the CIA Factbook online. As we were all watching him go through this process, he hovered over “Australia” in a dropdown list, then was momentarily distracted and looked away, then accidentally (I assume) chose “Austria” instead. He clicked on the “Economy” heading, then proceeded to read out and talk through all of the facts that came up about Austria's economy, presumably thinking that they were about Australia, and was surprised that his “beliefs about Australia were all so wrong”.



Figure 12: CIA World Factbook for Austria

As an observer (and an Australian), this was excruciating. Having been reading up on workplace trauma for my thesis, I had a feeling (without any certainty, obviously) that the confusion and disorientation I had witnessed in Chris all morning was in response to the anxiety he had mentioned. Consequently, I was desperate to help him out, but I was sitting down the back of the cavernous classroom. If I had decided to say something, I would have had to disrupt the whole class and could not do it subtly. Chris was ‘losing face’ with the class, but he was not aware of it. I could see that some of the students had noticed what was going on, and were muttering and giggling and looking at me. Others still looked quite serious and may not have noticed, happy to accept that Australia was “closely tied to other EU economies, especially Germany’s,” (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Neither outcome was ideal.

Of course, one could argue that this could have happened to anyone. Australia can easily become Austria with the tiniest slip of a finger on a mouse, and teaching is a highly absorbing affair, making it possible to miss small details on a screen. However, about halfway through his discussion of Austria/Australia, Chris unexpectedly (and without changing screens or websites or anything else) started referring to the webpage as if it were about Vietnam. He was pointing at Austria’s unemployment level of 5.7% and saying how surprised he was to see

such a low unemployment level in Vietnam, and then asked the students to brainstorm why this might be? The students didn't respond, and he suggested that perhaps it was because, in Vietnam, statistics get skewed by the government and the media. The students were starting to look very confused — a few were blinking, squinting, shifting in their chairs. Then as we got to the next statistics (by scrolling, again without a change of webpage to possibly explain his error), he went back to talking about the statistics as belonging to Australia. The activity finished, and he reminded them to always think critically about what they read or heard — who amongst them would ever have guessed some of those strange facts about Australia, after all? No one corrected him, and the class moved on.

As we left the room at the end of the session, he told me that he didn't really feel like he'd "had them" in that class and would have to reflect on that. Before I could say anything in response, he got a call from his wife, who was joining him in Vietnam from Malaysia that evening, asking why he wasn't at the airport to pick her up yet. He pulled a sticky note out of the top pocket of his blue and white checked business shirt and read it out to her, paused...he had written down the wrong time for her arrival. He quickly hung up, apologised perfunctorily to me, and rushed off to find a taxi to the airport.

Yet despite what seemed to me to be a very difficult day, Chris seemed to verbally communicate only the barest sense that all was not well in his world. He was persistently cheery throughout the entire experience, and his colleagues described him as a positive, upbeat guy who had settled in really well. In an interview conducted with Chris one week after this shadowing day, he again made a point of emphasising how well his world was:

It's been an unusually good week. You know, from day one I felt like there was a learning curve and an enjoyability curve, but there was also a frustration curve, and it was right near, it was parallel. But I have no problems. Everything has been absolutely — other than my personal banking which is probably 49% my fault and 51% the bankers or something. I don't know. But it's certainly not like the university has any direct involvement except that when I needed them, they were there to help. So, no, I don't think it has anything to do with life in Vietnam, just the opposite. I think everything here is positive for that, and I am still absolutely thrilled to be here. My days are still quite full here right now, between learning the system, doing the research now, which I am happy to do, which I really want to do. And the people are just terrific. We mostly spend Saturdays here, working on papers instead of in a movie or something and we thoroughly enjoy it. We'll find another time to go to a movie or play golf or something. There is just no — there are no issues between us and who is the leader or

anything, it's just — it's one of the things I enjoy most about being here.

Chris — lecturer, white, male, early-50s

Each time Chris veered off into possible negativity or even concern for his wellbeing during this passage, he immediately checked himself, either saying outright that there was nothing wrong (“I have no problems”), or justifying why problems had not been the university’s fault (“when I needed them, they were there to help”) or were not a slight against his new host country (“it’s probably 49% me and 51% the bankers... I don’t think it has anything to do with life in Vietnam”). When he felt himself indicating that perhaps the workload had been too high, he went out of his way to say how happy he was to be working on weekends, and how in fact all of his friends/colleagues felt the same way.

As Chris’s example suggests, for a newly arrived academic at IVU, the lofty goal of professionalism — that is, of combining appropriate (and culturally appropriate) levels and forms of emotional regulation, productivity, competence and service with authority — is much harder to attain. As an academic attempts to remake their unmade, chaotic world, they are also doing so many other forms of adjustment work: learning how to cross Saigon’s sometimes treacherous roads without dying; working out where to eat without getting sick; finding a place to live, at least temporarily while they are on their 10-week probation; organising phone plans, internet providers, banking. And as Chris’s experience further shows, none of these matters is simple, as they might be in one’s home country, where one understands both the national language, the geographical idiosyncrasies of the area and the cultural norms necessary for such quotidian tasks. So, to be doing all these things, while also upholding the four pillars of professionalism, is a mammoth task. Concealment work, then, is the work that an academic may be doing during the early days of their expatriation, to buy themselves the time and space to work through their chaos anti-narrative, reassemble and remake their unmade world, and return to leading “a proper life” that makes sense (Frank, 1995, p. 97). They may not be effectively producing professionalism during that time, but if their ability to do concealment work is up to scratch, they will usually, at least, make it through their 10-week probation.

Case study 2: Jae — Academic Troublemaker

In our previous example, Chris genuinely believed in the neoliberal mission and in a particular version of “professionalism in all things”. Consequently, he seemed to be expending enormous effort concealing the chaos he was experiencing from his colleagues (and possibly

from himself) to uphold the professionalism that was so important to his academic identity. In our second example, on the other hand, Jae, a Korean lecturer in his early 30s, had a different notion of what professionalism looked like in a university.

By the time I shadowed Jae, he had been at IVU for 11 months, having done his PhD then worked for several years at a university in the US. He was quite reserved in his manner, quiet and focused. We spent the morning at his desk, preparing for his classes and sporadically dealing with some administrative difficulties he had been having with the HR department. He had recently salary-packaged his rent after moving into a new apartment, but the HR department had not paid his landlord on time and was now claiming that he had never provided them with the new rental agreement. They did, however, withhold a portion of his salary to pay his children's school fees — except that he didn't have any children. It turned out that they had mixed him up with a colleague ("Do I look like a white guy with a wife and kids? No I do not."). Worst of all, he had recently been informed by HR that he had been undertaxed by nearly USD \$3,000 over the time he'd been at IVU, and that he would now need to pay this tax back to IVU quite rapidly, while also now having a lower net income than he'd been receiving for the last 11 months. As he often sent remittances home to his family, he was very concerned about this serious drop in his pay, telling me that "they don't need the money, but this way there is always a pool of money available for the whole family to draw from if needed." Several other lecturers at his level had also been undertaxed, and together they were trying to argue to HR that this error was not one that they should have to bear personally — it was IVU's error, and IVU should fix it.

A bitter dialogue was underway about this with HR, the day I was shadowing Jae, with the other lecturers dropping by his desk occasionally to discuss the latest developments. After a murmured discussion in Korean with another Korean lecturer, Jae turned to me, unhappy.

Can you imagine? HR lied to [colleague]. They said that everyone else except her is okay and have agreed to pay the money. Um, hello, what about me? What about him [gestures to an email from another colleague open on the computer screen]? They also wouldn't tell her who was at fault. They said it was just an 'organisational decision'. And she told them, if this is an organisational problem, then the organisation should pay for it, not us. Can you believe this stuff we're dealing with every day? I should be focusing on preparing for my classes; instead, all I've done this morning is deal with HR.

Jae — Lecturer, Korean, male, early-30s

Despite his frustration, Jae remained calm throughout this — the issue was important to him, but he expressed his distress quietly, perched uncomfortably on the edge of his office chair as if he only intended to be sitting there briefly. After turning back to his computer screen with a shake of his head, he then paused again:

Ooh, I must take my medication. I have a chronic ulcer. It's stress related. I think it's just from sitting in front of the computer, even eating at my desk. But that's the real world, isn't it? It could be worse, at least I can take medicine & it can get better.

Jae — Lecturer, Korean, male, early-30s

As he prepared his slides for his first afternoon class, he was frowning and muttering. I asked him what his frustration was about. He looked at me sideways, a look of disdain on his face:

The previous lecturer of this course left last semester, and the new coordinator wanted to develop all new materials, but he only lasted to halfway through the semester, so now we're using slides from the textbook [pulls disgusted face]. There's a lot that really bothers me with this course. I actually wrote a long complaint. It seems that some of the lecturers on this course have not been bothering to meet the course outcomes or stick to assessment schedules and have been covering it up for a long time. And I just think it's not right, it's not professional, it's not good or fair for the students. In the end, it should be about the students.

Jae — Lecturer, Korean, male, early-30s

At 1pm (having postponed lunch), we headed over to Jae's first class of the day. I was surprised at the change that came over him as soon as he entered the classroom. In conversations throughout the morning, he had seemed almost shy, yet the moment his first student appeared, he transformed almost to the point of game-show-host-jocular, spouting the latest pop-culture references and cracking jokes that had his students laughing uproariously. As the last student departed, his shoulders relaxed, his voice softened, and he returned to the version of himself I had observed prior to class. After we left the room and went to the cafeteria to get some food, I questioned him about this, and he looked at me, seemingly embarrassed.

Yeah, people tell me I'm quite different in the classroom. Vietnamese students really appreciate that kind of energy, I've realised. I didn't get it at first, so they didn't really warm to me, which matters here, you know? But then last semester I tried to be more friendly and get to know the students more. Most responded really well to that, and my GTS was definitely better, but on the downside, one of my students started stalking me, somehow got my phone number and

was sending me texts saying 'I love you, you're so sexy'; waiting by my motorbike after work; turning up outside my apartment building. I've lodged complaints with every department I can think of: HR, Student Services, but no one is interested, no one wants to do that job. And they just look at me like I'm a troublemaker or something. So that's been disappointing.

Jae — Lecturer, Korean, male, early-30s

Jae, like Chris, had a lot going on in his day. However, unlike Chris, Jae's demeanour was more reserved, less congenial, and he was not working to conceal his displeasure from HR or from his colleagues. On the other hand, he was working very hard to conceal his underworld of frustration from his students, so effectively in fact that one had taken his classroom friendliness as a sign of something *unprofessional*. As a consequence of his challenges in balancing these different personas, his difficulties seemed to be multiplying, or at the very least not improving. Throughout the day he had mentioned "complaining" to HR about his rent not being paid, his lost rental agreement, his colleague's children's school fees being paid out of his salary instead of his colleague's, and about paying back the tax he'd been accidentally paid. He had written "a long complaint" to his line manager about the poor state of the course he'd been given. And he'd "lodged complaints with every department he could think of" about the student stalking him. However, this approach did not seem to be having the desired effect. A few weeks after our shadowing day, I conducted a follow-up interview with Jae, and asked him for a progress report, particularly in relation to the student who had been stalking him:

Jodie: And you were also telling me last time that you'd been having some dramas with a student and —

Jae: Oh, yeah.

Jodie: How's that going?

Jae: Yeah, it's just, it was left there. No one wanted to do anything.

Jodie: So that's — it's still not resolved?

Jae: No. And some other people just said that, just forget about it. You couldn't have any [*pause*] you won't get any resolvment [*sic*]. I wonder why, because we're working in a very renowned university, with a good name. But it's just that people really don't want to do that job. And they just look at me like I'm a troublemaker or something which I don't think is really fair.

Jodie: Well, I'm sorry to hear that. I was hoping that by now, there would've been some movement on that issue.

Jae: No. I'm just there. They just said they don't have resources, they don't have, um, time to focus on this thing much. Okay, fine. But I mean, that might be one of the reasons people wouldn't want to stay here, because you [IVU] never, like, keep people in a good way. And, yeah. I don't want to say bad things, like, sometimes — it reflects their [IVU's] incapability to do some things. But I do ask myself, "Why you're still here?"

Jodie: So you've been trying to work with Student Services on this?

Jae: Yes, I've been trying, but I have to get back to them every time.

Jodie: Right.

Jae: Yeah, and it seems, right now, I'm hopeless. Because they're still not doing anything for me.

Jodie: Well, that's disappointing.

Jae: Yeah, I know. Kind of a big thing for me. I reported back to them and just said, "How could you have this kind of process going on when one of the biggest welfares that the expats are looking for is being safe and secure?"

Jae — Lecturer, Korean, male, early-30s

To Jae, for this "renowned" university to take care of expatriate staff members' health and safety seemed a logical and foregone component of hiring foreign academics. To him, it was, in fact, IVU who were behaving unprofessionally — professionalism in his mind involved mutual respect between a university and its academics. Consequently, he seemed genuinely baffled that IVU were not upholding their side of the bargain he felt they had made with him by employing him, and he subsequently felt that "complaining" about this was a reasonable response. IVU, on the other hand, did not seem to have the systems or processes in place to deal with Jae's "complaints". In response to this structural "incapability", the professional staff involved in his various disputes had labelled him a "troublemaker" (or so he felt). This possibly made it easier to dismiss his concerns, thus leaving him with no resolution to any of his complaints.

The consequences of effective and ineffective concealment work

I would argue that Chris and Jae, both relatively new to IVU, were both undertaking concealment work in different ways and areas of their professional lives — Chris working harder at concealment with his colleagues and superiors, and Jae working harder at concealment in the classroom. Consequently, Chris had a reputation with his colleagues and superiors — those within the population to determine academic professionalism — as “upbeat, positive, and settling in really well”. Jae, on the other hand, had an excellent reputation with his students as a good teacher. Moreover, his Good Teaching Score provided quantitative evidence of his rapport with his students; his research record was solid, and he was meeting the appropriate research KPIs for his level; and he described a number of high-level service projects that he had recently been involved with, including some for the Marketing and Student Recruitment teams. However, having “rocked the boat” as Edward Said (1994, p. 74) would put it, with his “complaints” to his boss and to various professional departments around the university, he had gained a reputation as a “troublemaker” with those in power. Unfortunately for Jae, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, even an academic doing excellent teaching, research and service will not be seen as professional (and thus have professionalism conferred upon him or her) if he or she is not also actively working to produce professionalism (and conceal any chaos) to display to academic managers. This is because, without the right kind of professionalism, an academic creates more work for IVU and this cancels out the good work that that academic may be doing in their substantive working worlds.

Towards the end of my fieldwork at IVU, yet another restructure was announced. The department in which both Jae and Chris worked would be getting another layer of academic middle-management, and existing IVU academics with PhDs were encouraged to apply for the multiple positions, although it would also be opened to external candidates.

Both Chris and Jae applied.

Chris was successful. Jae was not.

In fact, looking at their LinkedIn profiles today, in 2018, Chris has since been promoted again, to a higher level of middle management, while Jae is still a lecturer. Note that Chris and

Jae had the same qualification (although Jae's PhD came from a higher ranked university). They had a similar number of publications, they both had industry experience (although Chris had significantly more than Jae), and Jae had academic management experience from his previous university, while IVU was Chris's first academic job working on a bricks-and-mortar campus. Further, Jae had been working at IVU longer and had quantitative evidence in the shape of a high Good Teaching Score to demonstrate his worth — Chris was still in his first semester when the promotion positions were awarded. So why (I asked myself, and I heard several of Chris and Jae's colleagues question also) did a promotion go to Chris and not Jae?

My suggested answer to this is speculation — I don't have access to the criteria that was being used to assess candidates or have knowledge of how well either of them performed at interview. What I can say with confidence, however, is that Chris was able to draw on a greater combination of types of capital than Jae was in this scenario, and as Thomson (2005) has pointed out, "there is no level playing ground in a field; players who begin with particular forms of capital are advantaged at the outset because the field depends on, as well as produces more of, that capital." Given that, consider this: it is in IVU's best interest to have their most marketably authentic academics in higher positions in the university, where they are more visible. Chris epitomised everything that the university could hope to put on display to prospective students and parents. He was an older, white male who was heavily invested in the neoliberal university model and the need for academics to play their part in supporting that model. Just as importantly, even in those early days of his employment, his concealment work was so effective that he had professionalism conferred upon him by colleagues and superiors, despite suffering from the effects of chaos in the form of considerable anxiety. Of course, he was also meeting his KPIs, and doing the additional work of professionalism, not only the concealment work: he was regulating his emotions, producing teaching, research and service outcomes to an appearance of competence (except perhaps to me, who was systematically observing his movements), and providing "service with authority". So, to be clear, it is certainly not my contention that Chris didn't deserve his promotion. However, given the similarities that Chris shared with Jae in terms of their respective CVs, and given the differences between the two in their willingness to conceal their problems from the eyes of the university, I do not find it surprising that Chris has experienced ongoing success at IVU.

Conclusion

In *Chapter 5: Professionalism at Work*, I have demonstrated that a third proxy indicator of quality that academics can sell to IVU in exchange for their salary (in addition to whiteness and masculinity) is a particular form of academic professionalism. As with whiteness and masculinity, I have argued that professionalism is a construct that is separate to individuals and can, with work, be produced in collaboration with the population of others with the power to define what an academic should do and be. Also, as is the case with whiteness and masculinity, different academics have different levels of capacity to produce professionalism and do so with varying degrees of success. Often the success that they have is relative to how long they have been in Vietnam, and at IVU — the newer they are, and the more actants they have had removed from their academic network, the more destabilised that network is likely to be. As the case study of Chris illustrated, a destabilised network can create a range of stressors for academics with sometimes devastating results. Thus, in the first months at IVU, it can be necessary to undertake “concealment work” so that one is at least putting forth a professional façade, even if one is unable to *successfully* produce all four of the elements of academic professionalism — emotional regulation, productivity, competence and service with authority.

Further, some (such as Carl for example, who spoke out so vehemently against the neoliberal university model in previous chapters) choose to follow Edward Said’s call to resist professionalism, feeling this form of professionalism to be in conflict with the more traditional academic values aligned with intellectual pursuit. Thus, I have shown in this chapter that the “ideal” academic employee differs depending on the perspective from which we view it — the university, the student-customers and prospective student-customers, and the academics themselves all have wildly disparate notions of what an “authentic” academic may be. And in this Bourdieuan field, these differing notions of academic authenticity are a primary cause of the struggles in which, as I said in the introduction to this chapter, the various agents are battling for the power to interpret the field in the way that is most beneficial to them.

In Chapter 6, I will explore how the focus on producing marketable authenticity for and by the university has led to a discourse of crisis on campus, and the effects that this discourse has on the range of actors involved.

Chapter 6: How Marketable Authenticity Creates Discourses of Crisis

Thomas: In other places, you have friends at work, and there are friends outside work; here you just have friends at work.... If things are going well, then that tends to be really good. If things are going bad, while there is a support mechanism there, it can very often be an almost self-perpetuating — because people just sit there and give each other the bad news! They just repeat the bad news over more and more beers.

Jodie: Like an echo?

Thomas: [*nods vigorously*] And what was actually a *little* bit of bad news, by the end of the night is a disaster.

Thomas — Professional Manager, white, male, late-60s.

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that the focus on marketable authenticity at IVU has contributed to a perpetual crisis discourse on the campus and that this manifests in multiple ways, via individual crises and through to the pervasive discourse that the university and the state of higher education are in crisis.

Before we begin, a note on my use of the term “discourse” in this chapter. I consider discourses to be actants in a network — that is to say that they are forms of communication with the power to *do things*, and to cause changes within the network — as well as being actor-networks themselves. A discourse can only gain the power to undertake change within an organisation when it has been “stabilised” into the appearance of a durable network via the work of other actants. Lippert (2014) points out that in an organisational environment, these actants are often mundane: documents, humans and computers, for example. But when these actants work together and communicate effectively with each other, they can produce what Barnacle and Mewburn (2010, p. 439) would describe as a “highly built” organisational discourse.

Highly built discourses, in their turn, can move around the university with varying degrees of power. This idea was described quite aptly by one of my participants, a senior member of the President's Executive:

Ideas around here, it's like they grow legs and walk away from you. And once they've done that, you lose control over them, and they just adapt themselves to new situations or fit themselves into people's conversations in new ways, and just, wander about the university, creating havoc, affecting the way people think about things, changing things without your permission.

Peter — Non-academic executive, late 40s, male

If you think back to the spiderweb analogy in Chapter 2 in which I described how networks of prestige can be built; the discourses of crisis at IVU have similarly grown and strengthened over time, drawn strength from other webs, and enrolled new and novel actants to create specific nodes of strength. Thus, when I speak of discourses of crisis in this chapter, I am talking about networks of communication centred around difficulty, struggle, trauma and upheaval that have been built up, often over long periods of time. They have been established via interactions and communications between humans, documents and policies, physical objects and ideas. And for better or for worse, they have the power to create change.

Using this definition, I argue that there are (at least) three types of crisis discourse occurring at IVU that appear in the form of narratives, and that these have each had more dominance in the space at different periods in IVU's history. This is not to say that these discourses emerged in chronological linearity – indeed, they converge and coalesce, and as with all other constructs in this thesis, pop in and out of being depending on the work being done and the actants involved at any given time. The first, which I will call the “discourse of chaos” is related to the academic's personal mobility, and stems from the perpetual influx of new staff experiencing the kinds of chaos states described in Chapter 5 and then recovering from those by talking through their experiences with their colleagues. The second discourse, which I have called a “discourse of breakage” emerged from the discovery in 2014 that the university was actually likely to “go under” if significant staffing and budget cuts were not made. Finally, in part resulting from the emergence of the discourse of breakage, a discourse of

overwork has become prominent. This discourse is common in neoliberal universities all over the world, regarding overwork and lack of job resources, but I argue that at IVU it is amplified by the IBC context.

I further argue in this chapter that the discourses of crisis I observed are a *form of resistance* to the neoliberal discourses of success and continual improvement that IVU conveys both to external and internal stakeholders. I contend that the various crisis discourses have power on campus because they fortify the academics in their struggle against what they see as the university's desire to reduce them to a set of proxy indicators of Western educational quality that can be marketed to external stakeholders. By perpetuating these crisis discourses, they are subversively resisting the IVU's calls for professionalism, maintaining, as Said (1994) might describe it, their commitment to intellectualism:

Intellectuals are of their time, herded along by the mass politics of representations embodied by the information or media industry, capable of resisting those only by disputing the images, official narratives, justifications of power circulated by an increasingly powerful media— and not only media but whole trends of thought that maintain the status quo, keep things within an acceptable and sanctioned perspective on actuality— by providing what Mills calls unmaskings or alternative versions in which, to the best of one's ability, the intellectual tries to tell the truth. (Said, 1994, pp. 21–22)

Although Said is speaking more of whole societies, not organisations, the principle stands: in order to ensure that the “status quo” that is being maintained is an authentic or “truthful” one, a real intellectual resists the “images, official narratives and justifications of power” circulated by those with a vested interest in keeping things as they have established them. So, with Said, I argue that the emphasis on marketable authenticity at IVU by those in power has, at least in part, produced these crisis discourses from academics in response.

Perhaps there is a concern for the reader at this point that my use of the term “crisis” may be too glib. To describe perpetual organisational reordering as a crisis, however unpleasant the employees may find it, may appear to diminish the experiences of individuals and cultures under direct physical threat; who are experiencing violence

and/or the absolute destruction of their lifeworlds; or whose native cultures are on the brink of disappearance. These are, of course, more immediate and more striking than the everyday, average experiences of the average academic, foreign or otherwise. However, I hope that this chapter will demonstrate both that the term crisis is complex and multifaceted, and that the experiences of the staff at IVU are *understood and processed* as crises; an effect which has consequences. Whether and under which conditions those experiences meet a narrow definition of crisis as a life-threatening emergency is irrelevant to my arguments in this chapter.

In order to explore the above-outlined concepts, this chapter is structured into three parts. First, I will further outline the three discourses of crisis I observed at IVU. In the second section, I will explore the notion of discourse as a form of resistance to what Ahmed (2012) calls the "language of happiness". In the third section, I will discuss the consequences of these discourses on the staff and the university.

IVU's Three Discourses of Crisis

The year 2014 represented a specific moment of breakage in the IVU timeline. As a consequence, I have been able to identify three different crisis discourse narratives that can be loosely linked to the times before, during and following this breakage "moment", again acknowledging that the three do in fact overlap, and that the different discourses have emerged and been submerged at different times throughout IVU's history. However, for the sake of structure, let's now view these three time periods chronologically, and explore the discourses that were most prominent as they were occurring.

Before the Break: A Discourse of Chaos

The staff I spoke to who had been at IVU for a long time often said that the university had always been in a state of crisis. People frequently joked, to me and to each other, that if, as the saying goes, an organisation is always either "forming, storming, norming or performing", IVU was stuck in a perpetual cycle of "forming, storming, reforming and more storming"⁵⁰. Perhaps this perception of one's organisation is not unusual —

⁵⁰ This relates to Tuckman's (1967) trope of organisational cycles of performance, although no one ever referenced it when they talked about it!

Schinkel (2015) in his exploration of the crisis of modernity, posits that there is a cultural fascination with the notion of crisis, a fetishism perhaps, and quotes Walter Benjamin as believing the same:

There has never been an epoch that did not feel itself to be... standing directly before an abyss. The desperately clear consciousness of being in the middle of a crisis is something chronic in humanity. (Benjamin, 1982, in Schinkel, 2015, p. 42)

However, another way to look at this type of crisis discourse is as a way of processing states of change. The first months in a new country and workplace can be overwhelming, and were often described to me as such by my participants:

My husband and I felt like we were watching a movie for the first three months. We weren't actually in it, we were just watching it. And I think — the other thing that makes me laugh is the no language [sic – ie. not speaking Vietnamese]. So, you can't hear anything, you can't say anything. You're blind! And apart from on the IVU campus, you are really giving up your language and other easy things that you didn't even think twice about, you know, like shopping. So, I think for the first three months, until we got our own home, we were just in a state of adrenaline, like hyper-vigilant almost [*pause*]. Especially, because, my husband and I are actually introverts, so it was all a bit overwhelming.

Odette — female, 49, American, lecturer in Information Systems.

In the early days, this precipitated the kind of concealment work discussed in Chapter 5. However, as people began to adjust, and came to trust their colleagues, it was not uncommon to observe staff sitting together complaining. This seemed to me to be quite an enjoyable practice at times — as one of my participants wryly described it, “there’s nothing like a good bitch to make you feel like you’re all in it together!” This type of crisis discourse has been described (though not using that term) by higher education scholar Inger Mewburn (2011) in her explorations of “troubles talk” (Jefferson, 1980) in the case of PhD student complaining. Defined by Mewburn as occurring when “one or more people gather to tell stories of situations that have caused some kind of discomfort or disruption,” (2011, p. 321), troubles talk can indeed feel “comfortable” and “extremely satisfying” (Mewburn, 2011, p. 322) when it is done as a performance that both makes us legible to ourselves as well as others, and does

“affiliation work” (Jefferson, 2015) — that is, helps us to positively identify with and relate to the other people in the conversation.

In the first purpose of troubles talk described there — making oneself legible — I saw many examples of people using conversations with me, someone who had a vested interest in listening attentively without offering my own stories in response, to work through their feelings about their new experiences. This, I suggest, was a form of identity work, undertaken “as a way of learning and managing one’s place in the research world” (Mewburn, 2011, p. 330), and participants often commented to me following conversations or formal interviews that talking to me was like “free therapy”. On other occasions, I was predominantly an observer as my participants and friends shared “war stories”, as Mewburn (2011) describes it. One steamy Saigon morning, for example, I sat with a group of academics in the vast, open-air cafeteria at IVU, as they were telling stories of their arrival in Vietnam. This was not an uncommon topic of discussion at IVU, especially when new staff were arriving at the start of each trimester. The telling of these stories seemed to be something of a bonding ritual, because almost everybody had *something* exciting or frightening or frustrating to recount about their first week, and the sharing of these war stories helped to form in-groups and create bonds. British academic Molly said she thought it helped to put the trauma of arrival into long-term memory, helping to avoid PTSD. Australian academic Tara shared a story of arriving at the airport with her epileptic husband, being denied entry to the country, having their passports confiscated and having to wait without food or water at Immigration for 3 hours. American Michael talked about having his laptop bag stolen as he tried to hail a cab at the airport. As each story came out, the group became more animated, nodding, expressions of sympathy and laughter punctuating the dramatic but now historical stories of woe.

Another power that this kind of crisis discourse may be said to wield is the power to “establish one’s cross-cultural credentials” as anthropologist Tess Lea (2008, p. 4) has described it in her ethnography of white bureaucrats working with Indigenous Australians. Lea describes various ways in which the “helping whites” (p. ix) in her study aim to (a) avoid displays of racial ineptitude while also (b) bonding with their fellow helping whites and simultaneously (c) demonstrating their suitability for the

challenging conditions related to working in Northern Australia. She claims that, “there is a pressure and a code being enacted here: not to admit to some form of hardship is to deny membership of the fraternity, but a full confession of inability to cope would invite excision,” (p. 92). While the majority of foreign academics at IVU were less concerned about being seen as competent in navigating Vietnamese culture, certainly being able to survive challenges and then entertainingly discuss them was a way to establish credentials with fellow expatriates. Once one had passed through the “anti-narrative” stage (Frank, 1995) of orientation to IVU, when it was difficult for most academics even to discuss what they were going through, one could then move onto processing that chaos, while simultaneously proving oneself worthy to one’s peers.

As evidenced, there are multiple ways of interpreting the term crisis, and a final one of these is to view it as “a transformative space in and through which ethnographic knowledge can be generated,” (Beck & Knecht, 2016, p. 61). By exploring these kinds of crisis recollections and the positive contexts in which crisis was evoked at IVU, I argue that we can better understand the work that this discourse was doing for the academics, non-academics and the university itself in this space — that is, affiliation work (Jefferson, 2015). If crisis is viewed similarly to one of Sara Ahmed’s (2017, p. 187) definitions of crisis in *Living a Feminist Life*, for example — as “an opening, a new way of proceeding...depending on whether we think of a crisis as something that needs to be resolved,” — then we can use a discourse of crisis as a productive lens through which to view the effects of change. Further, when the staff at IVU theorise their experiences of adjusting to their new cultural and workplace environments through the lens of crisis, they are better able to unpack, as Beck and Knecht (2016) describe it, “the complex web of truth claims, legitimising practices, and value-negotiations that arise in *coping* with crises,” (p. 59, my emphasis). A crisis discourse of chaos is thus both a normal part of expatriating and even a necessary narrative device that helps foreign academics to adjust and process their new experiences.

During “The Restructure”: A Discourse of Breakage

Sara Ahmed (2017), in *Living a Feminist Life*, provides two definitions of crisis. The first, mentioned in the previous section, describes crisis much like a (perhaps unwelcome, usually unexpected) fork in the road — at the least, it catalyses reflection;

at worst, paralysis; at best, growth. Like Foucault's characterisation of power, in this definition Ahmed sees the crisis itself as neutral — it's what you do with it that determines what value judgement it may then attract. In her second definition, however, the one with which we shall work in this section, she is less optimistic:

When we say we have reached a breaking point, we often evoke a crisis, the kind of crisis ... when what you come up against threatens to be too much, threatens a life, or a dream, or a hope. (Ahmed, 2017, p. 187)

As aforementioned, IVU had always been characterised by its perpetual lack of stability — transience in staffing, in leadership and to some extent in organisational structure had always been a common topic of discussion and concern. However, according to my participants, the tone of these concerns changed towards the end of 2013, when the university's brand-new president, Elizabeth Goffman, announced that the university was in severe financial decline and that this had created a need to undertake a major organisational restructure.

The Restructure

For many of the academics who have worked at IVU for three or more years, The Restructure described a key moment of organisational breakage, in the form of a major reorganisation of departments and levels of management, significant downsizing, and a major overhaul of the campus's mandate. Let me remind you of a key discussion I had with an unidentifiable IVU executive, previously discussed in Chapter 2 on p. 68:⁵¹

Jodie: So, if you had to capture the goal that the President's Executive set for yourselves in that — perhaps in that first twelve months after the new president arrived — in a short sentence or a couple of sentences, what would that be?

IVU Exec: I would say it would have been to [*pause*] 'rescue' is too strong a word, but essentially to, well, to make the changes that were necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

Jodie: Okay. Do you think the staff were aware of — ?

IVU Exec: No, not at all.

⁵¹ I realise it's a bit strange to use the same passage twice in one thesis, but it is relevant for such entirely different reasons in this chapter that I hope you'll indulge the oddity.

Jodie: *[rhetorically — tone of disbelief]* How is that possible?

IVU Exec: Not at all. The Board wasn't even aware.

Jodie: Hmm.

IVU Exec: So, no, staff weren't aware, the Board wasn't aware, [the Home Campus] definitely wasn't aware. I think perhaps you've heard about the O.M.G diagram? *[Jodie shakes head no]*. Well, it was a classic diagram that [large, multinational consulting firm] prepared for us, and it showed student numbers doing this *[gestures downwards on a diagonal]*, and staff costs doing that *[gestures upwards on a diagonal]*.

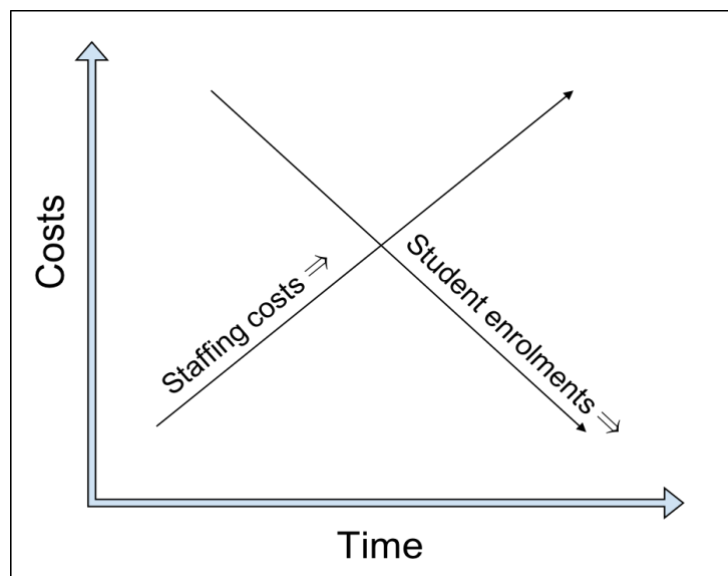


Figure 13: A reproduction of Figure 4, p. 73 - My depiction of the O.M.G Diagram as it was described to me by the IVU Executive.

Jodie: *[laughing]* Oh, I haven't heard it referred to as the O.M.G diagram before — I like that.

IVUExec: Yeah, it was really more like a W.T.F diagram. But that was essentially that, you know, it was all there, in one diagram.

Jodie: Yeah.

IVU Exec: And then it was like, 'Houston, we've got a problem'.

Jodie: Yeah. So, what process did you then go about in order to educate all the stakeholders that needed to know about that?

IVU Exec: There were town halls, but it wasn't well received. At the same time as

that was happening, we also discovered that we weren't compliant with Vietnam — with the number of PhD holders the university was supposed to have. So, not only was there a financial imperative, a student number imperative, there was also a staffing imperative regarding qualifications. So, there were multiple issues coexisting at the same time.

Considering this passage, the executive's description actually points out two moments of breakage. The first was the moment when the executives realised that the university was in crisis and the second was when they made the staff population aware of the university crisis and began implementing measures to fix that crisis. This then catalysed a *different* kind of crisis — of breakage — for the academic staff. Ramirez and Hyslop-Margison (2015) point out that there is a pervasive discourse of crisis on neoliberal universities in which the university claims that austerity measures and improved efficiencies are necessary for the university's survival and growth. This discourse, they argue, is, in fact, one of the key strategies by which universities can justify pandering to market forces. The difference at IVU, I would argue, was that this quintessential neoliberal manoeuvre was legitimate, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2 — the university really was going to shut down if drastic measures weren't taken. Consequently, as soon as the immediate crisis was averted, the senior management switched their messaging from a discourse of crisis to one of effusive positivity.

Unfortunately, however, the academics were still reeling at that point from the trauma of The Restructure. After years of being told that IVU was a teaching-focused campus and that the industry experience that academic staff brought in with them was the university's best selling point, the academics had become accustomed to the idea that they should not be doing research as it would take their focus away from their teaching. With the announcement of The Restructure, the academics were then told that if they did not have a PhD — and 95% of them did not — then their jobs would be advertised when their next contract came up, and if someone with a PhD applied, that PhD holder would get the job over the incumbent. In keeping with neoliberal market logics, most of IVU's academics found that they had a high likelihood of losing their jobs to some unknown newcomer, irrespective of the organisational loyalty they had demonstrated in the past, or of the skills or experience that either candidate might currently possess. As every foreigner at IVU had a maximum 2-year contract, this was

imminent for literally every non-PhD holding academic. As the visas of most foreigners at IVU were linked to their IVU work permits, a large proportion of the university's staff were very abruptly discovering that they could soon be required to leave Vietnam.

The imperatives that the executive referred to in the above discussion also catalysed several other initiatives. Although there were no forced redundancies in the initial restructure (although some were made in later restructures), an incentivised, and apparently generous voluntary redundancy package was offered to academic staff as the carrot to counter the stick of potentially losing your job to a PhD-holding applicant. This did contribute to the desired reduction in academic staffing. That said, I was told by several people that some of the best academics the university employed had used the financial boon offered by “the package”, as it was called, as a way to move onto better opportunities. Meanwhile, much of the “dead wood”, the academics who had nowhere else to go, had remained.

The reduction in staffing also necessitated a new workload model with higher expectations and more stringent requirements. This was, to some extent, to cover the work that had been left behind by those who had taken “the package”. However, additionally, the new model introduced the requirement for academics to undertake new marketing-related tasks like attending recruitment drives at high schools or running stalls at one of the three Open Days per academic department per year. The pathway to promotion was changed, which meant that some staff who had previously been promoted to Associate Professor level based on their excellent leadership in teaching and service were now demoted to the base Lecturer level because they did not have PhDs. Furthermore, as the executive implied above, the Vietnamese government had released a draft of the new Decree 73 in 2014, which not only mandated a minimum number of PhD holders at a university, but also stratified universities around the country into three tiers — the top 30% of higher education institutions in Vietnam would be assigned Tier 1 status, and the lowest 30% would be Tier 3 (H. Pham, 2015). “It’s not really fair,” academic manager Ryan told me:

Because we don’t hire anyone here with a PhD from a Vietnamese university, because they’re not considered international standard, but consequently most of the Vietnamese universities have loads of PhD holders, often their own ex-students, while we have very

few. Likewise with research, we're expected to publish in *top* journals, while academics at Vietnamese universities can publish in Vietnamese journals. Not even peer-reviewed or properly peer-reviewed, or even just in, like, trade journals or blogs or whatever, but that will still count towards their research output. So they'll have mountains of research to count when the Ministry do their audit to decide who will get Tier 1, and we're desperately trying to increase both our PhD holder ratio and our research outputs before that audit happens, 'cause if we don't get a Tier 1 rating, we're pretty much done. We need to be seen as a prestigious option for the money we charge, or we're done.

Ryan — Academic Manager, White, Male, Mid 30s, Australian

This combined nexus of events that occurred in 2014 was still, in 2016 during my fieldwork, generally referred to by staff as “The Restructure” although it was actually much more complex than just a restructure, *and* there had been multiple less consequential restructures before 2014. There had also been several other restructures after The Restructure of 2014, including one that was being rolled out while I was there. *The Restructure* of 2014 seemed to have gained almost epic status, referred to much as people now talk about the 2008 Global Financial Crisis or September 11; certainly, it had gone down in the myths of the university's history. People characterised the period leading up to and during The Restructure to me using phrases like, “there was blood in the water,” “there was pretty massive stress going on”, “it was a massive upheaval”, “people definitely felt pressure and felt threatened and all of that sort of thing”, “there were some major trauma reactions”, and “the place was like a pressure cooker” or “the level of antagonism and anger going in, you just couldn't say anything to anyone without it being like a, you know, like a match to the fire, really”. Even the IVU executive I spoke to, who had been one of the executors of The Restructure, said: “It was horrendous. It was absolutely horrendous. It came as a total shock to people because, “We were okay — what's wrong with you? We were fine. This was great, this was a great environment, it was fabulous until this new president came along.” So, of course, you're going to get resentment, you're going to get bewilderment, people couldn't hear, because they didn't know or they couldn't see, or they didn't want to see.”

Thus, The Restructure came to represent a schism between Before and After, the breaking point when everything changed, and in Ahmed's (2017) terms, it appeared to

me that it felt like too much for many of the academics, threatening their livelihoods, and their hopes and dreams for a future at IVU and in Vietnam.

Workplace loss, grief and trauma

In the introduction to her book *Healing the Downsized Organization* (1996) Delorese Ambrose describes the feelings of loss and trauma experienced by the employees who remain following restructure or downsizing:

Dubbed “survivors”, they find little comfort in the fact that they were spared the cuts...these survivors, like the casualties of layoffs, experience the trauma of loss. They must forfeit the vestiges of job security as they endure the physical and mental stress of working smarter, harder, longer and leaner in an organisation that may itself be in crisis... they must deal with the nagging side effects of despair, anger, depression and insecurity. (Ambrose, 1996, p. 3)

Although The Restructure had happened two years before I started my fieldwork at IVU, the event and its consequences were still discussed by staff on a near-daily basis — the code “Restructure” was applied 99 times during my analysis across my 96 document units. Further, staff used it with a level of emotion that I found somewhat surprising, given the time that had passed. I approached one of the professional managers about it, Linda, a Kiwi with a Master degree in Psychology who had worked as an Organisational Psychologist in New Zealand before coming to work at IVU five years earlier. I asked her whether she also found it surprising and whether she thought it could be a form of workplace trauma that I was witnessing:

Possibly. I can't say for sure. But I've definitely seen staff members who've been here a long time, or at least as long as me, who seem to be reacting with more of a trauma reaction of, you know, because each time something bad happens the reaction can be – the time to reaction can be shorter, and the intensity of your reaction can be stronger. So, you know, if you come in and it's your first restructure you are going to be, like, freaking out and doing the usual, you know, reaction behaviour of dealing with change. But if you have done it multiple times before, you are probably going to see different reactions. People who are very angry, very quickly about any change; or those who may be quite numb to it as well, who are just kind of like, 'Here it comes again,' you know, 'I can't care, otherwise, you know, it's too tough' ...You know, I've had staff members just say, you know, flat out, 'People don't respect us, there is no value in us, we are not

valued as human beings'. And that's the extreme end of the reaction of the change, is like hearing, you know, in the first instance hearing that if you don't have a PhD, then you don't have a guaranteed job, that that equalled 'I am not valued'. And that's not necessarily the message. It's not you as an individual, 'I am not valued', but that's how it is interpreted. And if the President's Executive don't pick up on that and do something about it and change that message, then you see staff leave.

Linda — Professional manager, female, white, late-30s

In an exploration of the effects of repeated waves of organisational downsizing, Moore, Grunberg, and Greenberg (2006) undertook research that supported Linda's suppositions. Moore and colleagues claimed that exposure to repeated restructures and ongoing fear of being laid off while also dealing with the grief of losing one's social network caused incrementally more harmful effects on employees' mental and physical wellbeing. Critically, they found that the most harmful effects came from the direct and imminent threat that *you* could have been one of those laid off, and still could be in the future. This is, of course, yet another neoliberal logic made manifest — as Bonanno (2018) contends, uncertainty and instability are “desirable and necessary conditions” (p. 280) for the successful perpetuation of the neoliberal model. While employees feel themselves to be at risk (of losing their job, or in the case of IVU's academics, of losing their job *and* having their residency rights revoked), they are more likely to toe the company line, and less likely to “rock the boat” as Said (1994, p. 74) puts it.

Considering the possibility that some restructures may do more damage than others, depending on the employee's relationship to that particular restructure, allowed Moore et al. (2006) to tease out what type of incident was more likely to count as a critical source of ongoing stress for staff. In the case of IVU, minor restructures were ubiquitous and their ubiquity had contributed to the perpetual discourse around “forming, storming, reforming and storming some more” that my participants described. However, The Restructure in 2014 was a breaking point. This restructure changed not only the staffing profile of the university but also catalysed changes to the way that academic work was conceived, which in turn changed the quality of the chaos discourse described in the previous section as a way of processing and coping with expatriation. This new crisis discourse, centred around notions of breakage, threat and upheaval, became a toxic and self-perpetuating cacophony of gossip and rumour.

Gossip and Rumour

Often during organisational change, communication from the top down is lacking or vague, leading to an increase in gossip, as “rumours circulate wildly in the vacuum, further increasing confusion” (Amundson, Borgen, Jordan, & Erlebach, 2004, p. 262). While the kind of gossip, complaining or “troubles talk” (Jefferson, 1980) that was described in Discourse 1 can have a productive effect, the kind of gossip that occurs in a communication vacuum during a traumatic event can be toxic for employee wellbeing. Further, as Thomas describes in the opening vignette to this chapter, this kind of discourse can easily become amplified when social networks are tight (Amundson et al., 2004). This can lead to a halo effect (Kahneman, 2011) in which people believe that this negativity casts a shadow over everything *about* the organisation, and everyone *in* the organisation, without their needing to be any basis for this in evidence. To illustrate: there was a pervasive view on campus during my fieldwork that academic staff were deeply discontented with IVU as an employer, particularly with the neoliberal audit culture that saw them measured against KPIs over which they had no control. One academic, Neville, literally *leapt* towards me the first time he saw me on campus in person, after seeing my photograph and project profiled in the staff newsletter, eager to talk about the injustice of the KPIs in the newly introduced workload model.

The academic staff at IVU are just so unhappy. There are now 14 KPIs — 14 KPIs! — for staff to meet, not just the GTS [Good Teaching Score] but also an overall satisfaction score that includes satisfaction with infrastructure, IT, WIFI, and other things that the academic staff can't control. *And*, we also have to achieve a GTS of 85 (out of 100) or higher. Which is okay if you have a really popular course, but if you teach a difficult course, the students resent how difficult it is, so they give *you* a low mark because they're pretty sure they are going to get a low mark for the course. It's completely unreasonable to base people's performance around the hasty opinions of resentful teenagers. So it's no wonder people don't love working here anymore. I mean, they used to, we used to all love it here, but now, well, things have changed a lot. I don't think I'm going to stay.

Neville — academic, Asian/American, male, late 30s

Why was Neville so very keen to tell me about his concerns? I asked one of my Vietnamese key informants, Nhieu (from Chapters 2 and 3), about this later on the same day — she laughed, making fun of my being an anthropologist by replying “IVU staff are

an under-researched community!” While she may have been teasing me, I think she may also have been on to something here. To describe it in Actor-Network terms: a network is built to the appearance of greater durability by enrolling more willing actants to mobilise the collective towards one or more goals (Latour, 1994). Neville, feeling unhappy himself with the changed employment conditions at IVU, wished to enrol both me personally, knowing that I was speaking to staff at all levels of the university, as well as my research outputs, as actants to help enact and sustain a crisis discourse on campus, with the key message that “things at IVU are bad”. This, in turn, had the potential to help Neville achieve the goal (subconsciously or consciously — I don’t know which) of resisting the university’s messaging of success and continuous improvement. I shall elaborate on this in Section 3.

Neville’s was one common performance of academic authenticity, but it was certainly not the only one being undertaken on campus. The results of an internal staff survey, for example, seemed to indicate an *improvement* in staff morale. Carly, the HR business partner you’ve met in previous chapters, put this down to the squeaky wheel phenomenon:

I think that one of the problems with IVU is that there is, like, this very vocal minority of unhappy people. So, you only hear from the same ones who complain a lot, you never hear from the ones who just get on with it, you know, because like I said, you induct them (upon arrival) and they go off into the university and you never hear from them again because they are fine. There was a poll survey recently — which is like a short staff survey — and someone said to me, ‘Did you see the results of the poll survey? It seemed like everyone was pretty happy when I *know* that they’re not. Why didn’t that show up in the poll survey?’ And I said ‘Yeah, that’s because the people that you’re talking about are the vocal minority, like if they sampled the whole university, like, took a hundred people from every type of job, you know, the unhappy academics would be this tiny percentage, yeah? But the ones that are unhappy are really, really vocal about it.

Carly — HR business partner, white, mid-30s, female

This is not to say that either Neville or Carly was correct or incorrect. In fact, I would argue that when the crisis discourse of breakage that emerged out of The Restructure prevails in any given setting, it is because it is serving a purpose within that context — if

it is not prevailing, then it is because it is not useful to those involved at that time. When the vocal minority of unhappy academics engage with each other in perpetuating the breakage discourse, they create and add to affective swirls of discontent as a means of bonding; of seeking particular outcomes, or as I shall discuss in Section 3, of resisting the university's increasing demand for academics to produce marketable authenticity. Anthropologist Nigel Thrift (2004) in discussing spatial affect might argue that these swirls gather momentum, affecting the moods and feelings of others as they circulate. As they get translated into different, perhaps more durable contexts — such as via technologies like online chat and email — the affect begins to bed down into the objects (such as emails, or policies), as well as into the humans, strengthening the network further.

In the social worlds of IVU, I would argue, fear and trauma flowed and lingered in this manner of affect; that is to say, these emotions “circulate[d] among bodies, and between bodies and their environments” (Dragojlovic & Broom, 2018). Terror seemed to shroud even the most positive of circumstances. For example, I asked one academic, Warren, what had happened at a much-anticipated (read: dreaded) departmental staff meeting he had just returned from. “It was, um, depressing,” he said hesitantly, sounding a little surprised. I asked him about his hesitation:

Well, I guess because it probably shouldn't have been, really. It was pretty much good news. Most people are getting pay rises, better job titles, the workload model has been redone so that it will take more factors into account which should result in fairer working conditions – other than my department's restructure, it was a pretty 'good news' meeting. But people were *miserable* coming out of it. I mean, people here are congenitally miserable. I don't think they're even capable of hearing good news anymore, they're so cynical, they just assume that 'change' equals 'bad'. They were saying 'no, no more change, we can't take any more change' and I'm going, 'yeah, but these changes will actually be good for you, they'll make your life better', but they couldn't accept it, they just assume that it's some kind of scam.

Warren — lecturer, white, male, early-40s.

Let us take a moment, then, to summarise the discourse of breakage on this international branch campus. The Restructure of 2014 catalysed two relatively new

forms of crisis discourse at IVU compared to that which had been circulating in the past. The first was the neoliberal crisis discourse from the senior executives justifying the need for change. The second was the “trauma reaction”, particularly from the academic staff, who had reached a point where they could no longer hear good news, constantly felt “under threat”, like they were “in a pressure cooker”. While this particular discourse seemed to have emerged in 2014, it was still prevalent on campus in 2016. Although the immediate emergency had passed and the university was no longer at risk of shutting down, the effects of The Restructure continued, particularly in the much-increased requirement for academics to perform academic authenticity for prospective students and parents. And thus, the related discourse of breakage — the discourse constituted of threats to identity, livelihood, hopes and dreams — prevailed.

After the Break: A Discourse of Overwork

The third form of crisis discourse at IVU revolves around the way the staff perceive the university’s (and the global higher education system’s) culture of overwork. In the introduction to this chapter, I posited that some readers may be concerned with the use of the term crisis to discuss the quotidian experiences of a relatively privileged group. It is in this third crisis discourse that I think the validation for using this term becomes most clear. Neoliberal universities do see real crises of the type described by Ahmed’s second definition: “when what you come up against threatens to be too much, threatens a life, or a dream, or a hope” (2017, p. 187). To illustrate, I would draw your attention away from my field site for a moment, to the case of Dr Malcolm Anderson, a senior accountancy lecturer from Cardiff University who took his own life in February 2018 (Walford, 2018). Without being intimately acquainted with Dr Anderson or his family, we obviously have no way to know the complexities of his feelings or what sequence of events led up to his decision to end his own life. However, according to the results of an inquest, we do know what Dr Anderson wanted his university to understand about his death, based on a note that he left on his office desk before he jumped from the roof of the university building in which his office was located. According to media reports of the inquest, the note explained that his decision was primarily due to the overwhelming pressures of his academic work.

I am drawing on this case rather than my ethnographic data to make this opening argument for a discourse around overwork in academia because a strikingly similar tragedy occurred at IVU not long after I finished my fieldwork. I won't discuss this sad event any further in this thesis — although I had met her, the academic involved was not one of my key informants, and I feel uncomfortable running the risk of politicising her choice without her or her family's permission. I mention it now to convey to the reader that I do not speak of the discourse of crisis at IVU or at neoliberal universities lightly — there are real consequences to the feeling, for whatever reason, of having come up against something that threatens to be too much. The feeling that the circumstances have come to be intolerable. The feeling of drowning.

Academia: A culture of overwork?

Zooming out again, then. When I decided to blog about the results of Dr Anderson's inquest, following the media and social media furores that followed, several academics in my social network approached me to share stories to use in my post (Trembath, 2018). This included, for example, a woman whose eyes began bleeding after a 16-hour day of marking, and many others who had experienced repetitive stress injuries or other physical disorders from, they felt, the stress of their academic jobs. Others shared their wide-ranging concerns on Twitter, particularly in response to a tweet from a postgraduate student who was also at Cardiff University:

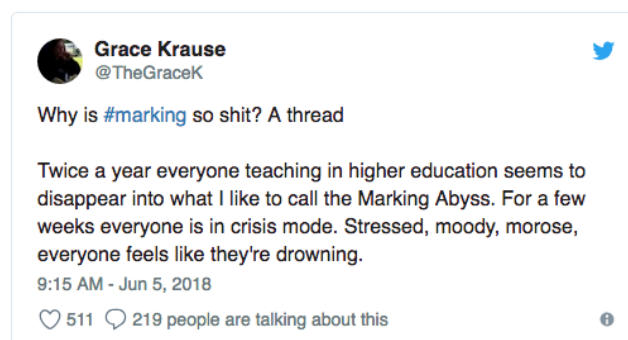


Figure 14: Tweet about marking by Grace Krause (2018)

The responses to this tweet about the simple act of grading papers were filled with emotion that would perhaps seem implausible to a non-academic⁵². Indeed, some of the tweets in reply to this outpouring of emotion were both confused and scornful that

⁵² Most professions have labour that necessitates repetitive, underestimated patterns of labour at certain times, and I'm not suggesting that academics either "have it worse" or are more emotional. I do think the outsiders to any industry struggle to understand the pressures that are specific to insiders within an industry.

something as dry as marking could evoke such a response. To explain this, I would draw on Marilyn Strathern's (2000) theorisation of why the ubiquity of audit procedures under neoliberalism actually constitutes a culture, not just a set of practices. Audit culture, she claims, has acquired a social presence. It is not simply about counting and accounting; it has the power to make people do and feel things — people become emotionally attached, experience anxiety, conform or resist to the pull of its norming operations. Similarly, one can see from the examples above that even “dry” academic work holds so much more meaning for academics than it might appear to an outsider. Thus, when the workload for these tasks exceeds the time available, it can indeed trigger a crisis of sorts — or even what the tweet above refers to as “crisis mode”. This was a term my participants used frequently, not only concerning marking but also to refer to keeping up with other aspects of the workload required of academics at IVU, catalysed by neoliberal ideologies, such as preparation for Open Days and recruitment drives.

Beyond anecdotes such as those above, research has also indicated that neoliberal universities are often hubs of mental health concern. A recent article in *Nature* titled “Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education” (Evans, Bira, Gastelum, Weiss, & Vanderford, 2018) found that postgraduate students (90% PhD students, 10% Master students) across 26 countries and across a diverse range of disciplines experienced depression and anxiety at more than six times the frequency of the general population. Another recent study, conducted at three universities in Norway, described dangerous levels of workaholism and work-family conflict amongst academic staff (Torp, Lysfjord, & Midje, 2018). Meanwhile, an older study of the Australian higher education sector showed that almost 50% of university staff at Australian universities were at risk of psychological illness caused by psychological strain, a statistic that was higher than the average across other sectors, and higher than some of the traditionally accepted “high stress” occupations such as correctional officers (Winefield, Boyd, Saebel, & Pignata, 2008).

In citing these statistics and stories, I am not implying a causal relationship. We don't know whether academia attracts people who are more susceptible to mental ill-health, or whether working in academia causes mental unwellness, or, as is likely the

case given that the world is messy and contingent, whether it is a combination of factors and that these differ across different contexts. For our purposes, it is not particularly relevant as to whether the chicken or the egg came first. What is relevant, is that these statistics indicate that this kind of crisis discourse, characterised by the circulation of these swirls of negative affect, is not unique to IVU — they are in fact ubiquitous in the global, neoliberal higher education sector. Again, let's use Marilyn Strathern's (2000) criteria for how audit *practices* should really be seen as an audit *culture*. I would argue that the way that this crisis culture can be translated across multiple contexts (within higher education, as I can only speak to the literature in higher education at this time), (a) has common discourse markers across these multiple contexts, (b) evokes emotional responses and resistances, (c) has moral implications and (d) has “acquired a social presence” (Strathern, 2000, p. 1). This “culture on the make” as Strathern would perhaps describe it, has been catalysed by global and neoliberal practices of higher education, including, I argue, the varying but ubiquitous existence of marketable academic authenticity and the varying need for academics to make this their top priority.

The Language of Happiness and Discourses of Resistance

The term ‘Town Hall’, it's a misnomer. A town hall reflects the idea of a discussion with constituents, whereas this was a [pause], a flight fantastic. It's almost like – it's a really interesting development, I think, that marketing and branding have become THE university, it's become central. And I think it's been typified by Marie (Head of Marketing at IVU), who I think is a very competent person, a marketing extraordinaire, so to speak. So now *Marie* is central, what she *says* is central – I played bullshit bingo while I was listening during the Town Hall, and my favourite statements were ‘entrepreneurship expressway’ and ‘consuming content’...

Carl — lecturer, white, late-50s, Welsh.

In his classic anthropological text, *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia*, Victor Turner (1968/1981) describes how Ndembu society deals with crisis at both personal and societal levels. While this may seem at first to be a non-sequitur from our discussions of an international branch campus of a Western university in Vietnam, I think there are in fact interesting parallels

to be drawn between Turner's descriptions of Ndembu rituals and the rituals used at IVU⁵³. Like IVU, Turner describes Ndembu society as "labile"; its parts are highly mobile, exhibit much independence, and are always entering into new and generally transient combinations with one another," (p. 52). This sounds like a very similar description to the one I gave earlier in exploring the IVU actor-network, which is also constantly being made, the actants combining in new and novel ways to achieve new goals and hit moving targets. Therefore, drawing on Turner, in this section I wish to explore how the senior executives at IVU have attempted to use ritual to repair the damage of The Restructure. However, as can be surmised from the opening quote from Carl, I suggest that these attempts have backfired. The more toxic discourses of crisis — breakage and overwork — that have emerged at IVU, act as a form of resistance to what staff perceive as the discourse of success and continual improvement that IVU, and the executives who best represent IVU, convey to both external and internal stakeholders through these ritualistic performances.

As discussed in the previous section, there is a clear Before and After regarding The Restructure of 2014 at IVU. Before the restructure, the crisis discourse at IVU was one of chaos, similar to the chaos discourses that one might see in other global workplaces around cultural difference, culture shock, and the varying degrees of adjustment or maladjustment individuals were making to their new cultural and organisational environment. There were also, to a much lesser extent, the same kinds of crisis discourses one might see at any contemporary university — the discourse of continual improvement evoking constant crises in order to reinforce the need for greater efficiency (Lorenz, 2012, Shore, 2008), and the overwork discourse in response.

Often when writing about neoliberal practices such as restructures, scholars of higher education position the managers as the villains of the story. That is not my goal here. I would suggest, in fact, that the senior executives at IVU suffered deeply from The Restructure, just as the staff did, albeit in different ways. The "O.M.G/W.T.F" moment experienced by the senior executives when they realised that the campus would have to

⁵³ I do not believe that Victor Turner would take umbrage at my appropriation of his work in such a different context, given that he went so much further than many other anthropologists of his era in theorising his ethnographic observations so that they could be applied elsewhere.

close if *they* couldn't turn around the dire simultaneous trends of falling student enrolments and skyrocketing staffing costs must have felt like an overwhelming responsibility. Further, this realisation was made almost directly following the appointments of a brand-new President⁵⁴, Vice President⁵⁵, and several other new senior executives. As the executive I mentioned earlier described it, the discovery that the campus was in dire straits constituted a "baptism by fire" for this newly formed President's Executive Group, and to have the group's first order of business be to announce major downsizing and restructures was understandably "horrendous". Several of the executives admitted to me that they felt the communication around The Restructure of 2014 had been very poor, and were both sympathetic as to why the staff took it so hard and relieved that it hadn't had more lasting consequences than it actually had.

Thus, it is comprehensible that, as the student numbers started to pick up again, and as the waves from The Restructure started to settle, the President's Executive Group would have been both personally elated, and felt the need to convey this good news to the staff, to bolster morale. I observed multiple examples of these morale-boosting exercises, usually in the form of staff meetings and whole-staff town halls, held in the 500 seat lecture theatre. These were always packed to the rafters and seemed more like pep rallies than staff meetings to me. Sometimes the Executives would enter as a procession, with upbeat pop music playing and a slideshow of photos from a recent Open Day or Recruitment Drive playing on the two-storey-high projector behind them (other times the technology would not work and they had to enter to the mere sound of staff chatting). President Goffman, looking glamorous and energised, would make jokes ("We can't get the tech working, the sharks must have been chewing on Vietnam's underwater internet cables again"), point to people in the audience and make personal asides or give compliments by name ("Tom, you know all about that don't you!"), use slang ("Sometimes we suck, but hey, *they really suck!*"), and would move around the stage flicking the microphone cable like a seasoned rock star and generally entertain

54 The previous President had taken early retirement for personal reasons 18 months earlier and IVU had been under the direction of a caretaker president between then and the arrival of Elizabeth Goffman in 2013.

55 The previous Vice President had also "retired", then promptly taken up a similarly senior position in an IBC elsewhere in Asia.

her audience. The audience, for their part, appeared to respond very positively to this — there was plenty of clapping, cheering and laughing at her jokes.

Following an introduction from the President, Marie, the Head of Marketing, would generally get up to give an update on student recruitment numbers, because, as Marie pointed out in one of her presentations, “the market is changing, and this is something that teachers ought to want to know about”. These updates were almost invariably positive and also delivered in an entertaining manner, similar to the emceeing by the President. After the student enrolment numbers for each program were announced with great aplomb, Marie would wait while the audience clapped and cheered. Everyone, performer and audience, played their part to the letter.

As Turner (1968/1981) points out, “crises in the affairs of a social group often provoke ritual measures of redress” (p. 52). I argue that the goal of these Town Hall meetings, in the minds of the President’s Executive, was to use ritual as a means of rallying the troops, reuniting the fractured faculty, and as Turner describes it “overcome cleavages” (p. 270). By using what Turner calls “social drama” (p. 274), the executives sought to restore “the health of the corporate body, with securing balance and harmony between its parts,” (p. 270) in the continuing wake of The Restructure of 2014.

However, in spite of the shared performance of unity that occurred throughout the Town Hall “rituals” in the shape of laughter, whooping and applause for example, upon exiting the lecture theatre, these performances would change. I would always ask my participants how they thought it had gone, and what they thought of the announcements made. Without fail, they were scornful and highly resistant to the goal of these rituals. They referred to them as “flights of fancy”, and “sand castles in the air”. The Director of Communications told me that he had once received an email from a staff member following a Town Hall, that said, “Dear Hans Christian Andersen, I particularly enjoyed the fairy tales you told us this week, *but...*”. Discussing the President’s Executive Group’s penchant for “spin” during Town Hall events once, Welsh academic Carl said: “This is how disconnected they are, that they think that would work. As I’ve said before, doing PR in front of a bunch of academics is a tough gig because we see right through it. No one came out of that Town Hall saying ‘sounds like we’re on track!’ God no.”

In *On Being Included*, Sara Ahmed (2012) describes a phenomenon she witnessed in exploring diversity practices at her employing university — the use of “the language of happiness” (p. 146). This phenomenon involves (specifically in Ahmed’s example, university managers) denying that there are any problems, claiming that “everybody is happy”, and choosing not to talk to anyone who might wish to introduce problems or counter this language of happiness. One could argue that this is another form of concealment work, such as the work that Chris was doing in Chapter 5 to maintain the facade that everything was okay and that he was not crumbling internally, except that this type of concealment work is on an institutional scale.

Unfortunately for the executives at IVU, the academics, in particular, were both willing to *perform* that they were in unity with the discourse of success and the language of happiness that were being enacted in Town Halls (and in other institutional communications), but were simultaneously unwilling to trust what the executives were trying to convey entirely. By instead drawing unity with their fellow academics via the various discourses of crisis on campus, they were better able to bolster their “authentic” academic identities. This was in opposition to the academic identities that they felt the executives wanted them to perform, those being the more “marketably authentic” identities that demonstrated a facade of educational quality to prospective students and parents. Thus, I argue that the swirls of negative affect that would pick up and circulate following an event such as a Town Hall were a form of resistance to the language of happiness being used by the executives, which was in itself a resistance to the discourse of breakage that had eventuated out of The Restructure.

It was perhaps in the academics’ best interest to play these dual roles — Ahmed (2012) points out that those who speak in opposition to the language of happiness become the *source* of the unhappiness, the *cause* of the injury. However, their dualism was problematic for the overall healing of the university. Similarly to how Garsten and Nyquist (2013) describe the World Economic Forum, IVU draws its legitimacy and reputation, at least in part, from the individuals who are willing to be enrolled in the creation and perpetuation of the organisation. If the academics who are the product being marketed to customers are not on board with the university’s vision of unity, then

rituals such as Town Halls become empty symbolism and are destined to be unsuccessful. Turner (1968/1981) points out that for unity to be attained through ritual, all voices of complaint or dissent must first be heard:

...a wish to unite is not the same as a lively sentiment of unity. There may be an agreement to attend a performance, but it is an agreement between those who differ and wish to transmute their differences into an authentic solidarity... that is why we find, in analysing the successive stages of many kinds of ritual, an increasing disclosure (either explicitly, in confessions of mutual ill-feeling, or implicitly in the guise of symbolic actions and articles) of all wishes, ideas and feelings which threaten to obstruct the progress towards the ideal unity. (Turner, 1968/1981, p. 270)

It is in this, the suppression of discourses of crisis in pursuit of the language of happiness, that IVU loses its ability to heal through ritual. In performing their solidarity during Town Halls, possibly by telling management what they think they want to hear on staff surveys, even by informally seeking the executives' approval in one-on-one settings (the unnamed executive told me that staff often "suck up" to the President in the elevators, for example), the academics are not disclosing their differences. Thus the threats that "obstruct the progress towards the ideal unity" (Turner, 1968/1981, p. 270) remain.

Consequences of Toxic Crisis Discourses: Trapped or Biding Their Time

As previously determined, toxic discourses of crisis such as those catalysed by The Restructure (breakage), and those catalysed by a culture of workaholism (overwork), can circulate throughout an organisation having nefarious effects on whomever they touch. This, in turn, has negative consequences for individuals, in the form of social and psychological strain, and for the university, in the form of reduced organisational commitment and higher rates of absenteeism and turnover.

Despite their often-adverse circumstances, however, my observations of IVU's academics were, on the whole, of a group of caring, hardworking, intelligent professionals, each with what I would awkwardly call "good intentions". This observation was, for the most part, backed up by my informants, who often described a

strong sense of community and respect for their fellow academics, even when they didn't agree with their world views or academic philosophies. In the biennial IVU staff satisfaction survey conducted in 2015, confidence in co-workers, relationships with other academics and the perception that IVU staff help and support each other were some of the only items that received above an 80% satisfaction rating, consistently, across all of the academic departments.

This did not, however, translate into a desire to remain with the organisation in the long term. Recall the attrition statistics I outlined in Chapter 1 (see Appendix A for diagrams). Given these high rates of turnover at IVU, it did not surprise me to hear these academics talk about their exit plans frequently. I argue that the academics of IVU's Saigon campus were all either a) trapped and felt that they *could not* leave for various reasons, or b) were biding their time before moving on, again for a number of reasons. Let's first examine the academic who feels that he or she cannot leave IVU and the discourse of crisis that surrounds this notion.

Academics in Captivity: Discourses of Feeling Trapped

One of the most common constituents of this category of academics who felt that their futures were indelibly tied to IVU were Western men who had married into Vietnamese families. Over coffee in the Calmette Cafe one afternoon, Linda, the professional manager with the psychology degree mentioned in the previous section, discussed her concerns for the male academics who felt that they could not leave:

We have a lot of men here who [*pause*] — they come to Vietnam, they meet a local woman, and they commit very quickly, marry very quickly. So, I've seen, in the stress of the restructures, often the men had committed to a local family, and then felt, 'well where am I supposed to go [if I lose my job], what am I supposed to do?' The restructure, and feeling like your job isn't safe, had a very different, stressful impact on expat men with Vietnamese families — occasionally with expat women, but it's mostly men. And there is no other university in Vietnam that feels like it has the same expat support, so if you're an academic, yeah definitely, you're going to feel like IVU is your only, or at least your only viable, option. The perception is very strongly that if you are losing your job as a lecturer than you need to go overseas to find a different academic job. And if you have a family here, and you don't feel like you can leave Vietnam, how do you deal with that?

Linda — Professional Manager, white, female, late-30s.

Unfortunately, for these academics, having, or perhaps moving to, an external locus of control often resulted in feelings of anger that Linda described as “damaging”:

You still see it, even now [two years after The Restructure], you know, people who are just, without any obvious need to, would just be angry when asked anything about their job. And so, you know, that level of anger, that consistently, can be very damaging. And what I saw when The Restructure happened was that brand-new staff with PhDs would come on board and walk into a toxic environment where people were already angry about The Restructure, but also very angry with the person with the PhD because that person was perceived to be stealing jobs, but also being seen [by management] as more valuable. And when I [the angry academic] think, ‘my boss sees that person as more valuable than me,’ then I am angry at that person as well. And so, we’ve seen a lot of PhD holders come and go because they were like, ‘Well, I thought that this would be an environment of research and support and a nice place to work and yet everyone around me is angry’.

Linda — Professional Manager, white, female, late-30s.

An individual’s anger in a workplace, particularly a burning, nagging anger caused by ongoing feelings of helplessness and/or captivity (Scioli & Biller, 2009), can have far-reaching effects on co-workers and on an organisation more generally. In the organisational behaviour literature, these kinds of behaviours (such as outbursts towards colleagues; damaging, wasting or stealing resources; intentionally not following procedures; etc.) are referred to as “workplace deviance” (Belmi, Barragan, Neale, & Cohen, 2015). In an open office environment like the one at IVU, anger and workplace deviance behaviours would impact on the aforementioned circulations of affect — or what I have described as “affective swirls” — within the space, and these negative swirls then have the potential to catch others up in their journey.

As this thesis is interested in materiality, we might ask what the material causes of these swirls of negative affect might be? To explore this question, management scholar Christian Borch (2009) uses the work of German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk on “foam theory” — that is, the notion that humans are cells within a foam-like structure, with each cell *imitating* other cells, rather than communicating with them. He creatively

combines Sloterdijk's work with the work of feminist theorist Teresa Brennan, in her contention that affect is transmitted physiologically from human to human via biological and biochemical changes that trigger similar changes in others. In combining the theories of Sloterdijk and Brennan, Borch contends that affective swirls in organisational environments are the result of these biochemical changes in an individual triggering mimetic changes in the other employees nearby, creating an "organisational atmosphere" that can be *physically* experienced upon entry into a space. It is this kind of experiential engagement with affect, Borch argues, that leads people to make comments like, "you could cut the tension with a knife". I had a similar experience on fieldwork, where one of my key informants, Deena, standing awkwardly outside our shared office doors and playing on her iPhone, stopped me as I was about to enter. "Don't go in, it's a swirling pit of negativity in there," she warned me. She had felt the need to leave the shared space, as one of her colleagues (another of my informants) and his manager were having a heated discussion about the colleague's performance. The raised voices and her colleague's evident anger and mortification had created "a really negative vibe" that had caused her hairs "to all stand on end". She experienced the emotion in the space physically, and it had evoked a sympathetic distress response, even though the criticism was not aimed at her.

The implications for this notion, at IVU, are that when people feel trapped, and their negative emotions are strong enough to catalyse biochemical responses, these "feelings" can become contagious and spread to other staff members, literally like a virus. And as with the spread of a virus, a tight-knit community is more prone to contagion than one that is less intensely connected. Wesley, a senior executive of the university, described why these negative affective swirls could be more prevalent and powerful at IVU, resonating more through the community than anywhere else he had worked before.

It's a very — well, it's a very close-knit community. There is very little social distance. And so, the crossing over of — it's almost like a Venn diagram, the crossing over of the sort of professional space and a social space. There is too much intersection, way too much intersection, which I have never seen anywhere else before. After two and a bit years here, I would say this has a terrible, negative impact on the workplace — terrible. When there isn't that large intersection, you know, incidences can happen that don't have such a big effect, but when the intersection is really big, every incident, instead of

having a ripple, it has a tidal wave. It really does. And that's not good for the workplace at all. It's not good.

Wesley — Executive Committee Member, white, male, early-50s

On the other hand, Emeritus Professor David Watson in his final opus before departing the academy, *The Question of Morale: Managing Happiness and Unhappiness in University Life*, indicates that a high level of collectivity in universities, while not necessarily positive, is at the very least normal:

Universities are peculiar places, especially in how people relate to each other. They are both insulated from and implicated in the ongoing and the transient concerns of a wider community (whose interest in their affairs is growing, not receding). Corporately and collectively, they can behave well or badly on a number of levels, as can the individuals within them. At their best, they can achieve remarkable things; at their worst, they can be petty, corrosive, even dangerous. (Watson, 2009, p. 141).

Either way, it stands to reason that an organisational atmosphere swirling with negative emotions is going to have various effects on the organisational morale of the university community at large. And one of the key ways in which these swirls of negative affect circulate is via discourse.

The Holdouts: Discourses of Precarity

What to make, then, of those academics who did not feel trapped — the ones who could choose to leave, but had not? I contend that this statement must almost always be amended, in the case of IVU's academics, to include the word "yet". Of these academics, who I suggest are merely biding their time, either happily or unhappily (and this is not to say that either is an immutable state), I observed three broad categories: Early Career Academics (ECAs), Late Career Academics (LCAs) and a category that I am calling the "Happy Holdouts". Let's begin with the ECAs. Many of these were new to the organisation, having arrived immediately post submission of their PhD (usually before they have even graduated). As senior executive Wesley pointed out to me, IVU could be a smart career move for an ECA:

For an early career academic, Vietnam is an international experience. It's a university where you can get quick leadership experience, there are fewer of us, it's smaller, you

can be seen, you can be a star, you can excel. So, for an early career academic, it can be a kick-start to a career which, in a big institution, will take you a lot longer to achieve, because there is no competition.

Wesley — Executive Committee Member, white, male, early-50s

That said, however, new ECAs, particularly those with PhDs, rarely had an easy time of it at IVU. As manager Linda pointed out in an earlier section, turnover of new PhD holders seemed to be higher than any other group of academics at the university. This was at least partially due to what several academics described to me as “a culture of anti-intellectualism” compounded by the anger and jealousy engendered by The Restructure and the new rules about undertaking or holding a PhD in order to keep one’s job.

Arriving at IVU in the middle of the semester, only two days after submitting her PhD thesis for examination, Kai’s experience is a good illustration of this. Because the semester had already started while she was in the final stages of writing her dissertation, she was required to begin teaching the day after she flew in, leaving her no time to find a place to live, get over her jetlag, or even acquaint herself with the course materials. Within her first week, Kai had come down with “the dreaded lurgy” (a common expression at IVU used in reference to a bad head cold that frequently afflicts newcomers to the country). She was so unwell that she could not come to work for several days and had to ask her line manager — the only person she had met and had a phone number for — for help in finding a doctor. When she returned to work, still feeling decidedly under the weather, she discovered that during her absence, one of her colleagues had emailed her to say that, seeing as she, Kai, had a PhD, she should take over the coordination of the course that they would be sharing, effective immediately. The colleague made it seem like a *fait accompli*, although Kai had not been informed that she would be taking on a coordinator’s position (a role that should have attracted time-release from teaching). When Kai approached her line manager about this, he replied that he hadn’t really thought about it, but actually, it made sense seeing as she was the more experienced academic. Kai felt very uncomfortable about this description, given that her colleague, although sans-PhD, had been working at the university for many

years, while this was her, Kai's, first experience of academia beyond tutoring during her doctorate.

On the other hand, she was concerned by what she also categorised as a “culture of anti-intellectualism” at the university, particularly amongst the non-PhD holding staff:

I've had some real gems from the other lecturers, so many of them have said, 'oh, you're teaching theory courses, oh, I feel so bad for you, that's really rough.' And it really pisses me off because I really like this stuff! This interests me, and it just makes me think, 'what kind of place have I come to?' There's such a culture of anti-intellectualism here! Did you hear that student yesterday ask if there was a limit on how old the references need to be? As I said to him, this is sociology, we are working with theorists who may have proposed their theories in the 60s or 70s, but they're just as valid and useful today, which is why so many people still refer to them! I've heard lecturers here refer to the 'no dead Frenchmen' rule — that if the theory came from a French guy who has already died, it's completely irrelevant. And I was watching a guy in my office marking the other day, and there was a reference from 2003 and the guy crossed it out [*makes vehement crossing-out gesture*] and wrote 'Too old!'. I mean, where did he get that idea? Who are these people? Where am I? Have I really made the right decision, coming here?

Kai — Academic, non-white, early-40s, female

Although Kai was grateful to have found an academic job so quickly, she wasn't convinced that she had made the right decision in coming to IVU. Within her first few weeks, I observed her apply for several other jobs, sometimes at the expense of spending time on her research — she had already begun the process of turning her thesis into publications, but postponed this to work on job applications. She said she wasn't actively looking — yet — but these opportunities had been too good to pass up. “I will probably start looking actively to leave mid-next-year. I would possibly look actively now, but it's just too exhausting! I don't have the energy to think about leaving now.” Later in the semester, she reiterated to me that if she didn't get any traction on the jobs she had applied for already, she would just bide her time for a while, regather her energy, and if things hadn't improved, then she could start applying again. That said, she remained hopeful that they *would* improve, as she felt that there was a lot of potential at IVU that just hadn't yet been harnessed, and if only she could “get ahead of the eight ball”, she would be able to “tap into that”.

The second category of academics who stay constitutes the Late Career Academics (LCAs) — those nearing retirement. Molly and Harvey, a British married couple in their early 70s, came to IVU after many years of university teaching in Eastern Europe. Disillusioned with the decreasing emphasis on student learning and increasing emphasis on student entertainment, they had tossed up whether to retire back to the UK or have one more run at academia first. When the positions at IVU came up, they liked what they saw in the job ad — a focus on student-centred learning in a well-equipped university environment, in a part of the world they'd never spent much time in. It appealed to their sense of adventure, as well as their pedagogical values. Both Molly and Harvey agreed to be key informants in my research separately, and each mentioned over the course of our time together that they had strongly considered resigning in their first few weeks at IVU, but hadn't mentioned it to each other at the time. Both talked about the intensity of arriving in Vietnam, and how unexpected this was, given that they had expatriated from the UK twice before, to two different Eastern European countries. And although they had been employed into different departments, they were both surprised and disappointed by the disparity between the rhetoric on IVU's website, and the reality of their new academic environment. In a conversation that I had with Molly when she'd been at IVU for about 6 months, she spent the first twenty minutes telling me what a great week she'd had at work and with her students, but then followed up with:

On the other hand, I am still looking at other work. There is a really good job in Amsterdam that Harvey sent to me. I am probably at the strongest I've been for a long time in terms of trusting what I am doing, and I am not sure that this [IVU] is the venue for that. I am not sure this university's ready. And frankly, Amsterdam, really? [*Her eyes glint with mischief, then sober.*] Now, there is no guarantee that that would ever happen, but there is no reason for me to [*pause*], not to keep my eyes open. There is *really* good reason for me to look though, and think about — I've probably got a year and a half left that I want to work, you know? And I need to be honest with you. I don't want to stay here any longer. I don't. I don't see the opportunity here that I would be looking for. I see a very top-down management system.

Molly — lecturer, white, female, early-70s

Molly's husband Harvey, although more interested in seeing out their 2-year contract, was finding himself exhausted by the relentlessness of the workload.

In other universities, you get these long teaching breaks, so by the end of the break, you're getting excited about the changes you want to make, you feel refreshed and excited to get back in the classroom. But with only a few days between semesters [at IVU], you just never get to that part, you don't have time for all that self-reflection. And from my own knowledge, you cannot be an effective teacher if you're worn out when the semester starts. And it's not long enough to be able to get to the UK and back, so we probably won't make it home this year, and that's hard, it's hard to be away from our kids, our friends. I've always been a strong advocate for the summer break, but now I value it even more because it really is critical to being good at this job, especially as an expat. They keep trying to convince Molly and I to renew our 2-year contract early, or at least to commit to renewing, but I don't think we will. It's just too much.

Harvey — lecturer, white, male, early-70s

For Molly and Harvey, IVU was supposed to be their "last hurrah". This meant that leaving IVU was supposed to mean leaving their careers, their academic identities, and their identities as global citizens and explorers behind, to move into the English cottage they had purchased for their retirement in a small village not far from their children's homes and become retirees. To consider leaving IVU early, before their 2-year contract expired, meant one of two options. They could either seek work that would last only for the 18 months that Molly felt she "had left" in her, in the knowledge that finding academic jobs for a married couple in the same city (never mind in the same university) was becoming an increasing rarity. Or, they could retire early and risk the regret of bowing out too soon. Thus, for LCAs like Molly and Harvey, the disruption of leaving was in constant tension with the discontent invoked by staying.

A final category of the "holdouts" at IVU is the Happy Holdouts: those who did not have a PhD and did not intend to get one, but were content to wait it out in Vietnam until a PhD holder applied for their job, or until something else fell into their laps. David, a "pracademic"⁵⁶ (Panda, 2014) who joined IVU seven years ago following a long stint as

⁵⁶ According to Panda (2014) "A pracademic is someone who is both an academic and an active practitioner in her or his subject area. She or he is a person who spans both the ethereal world of academia as a scholar and the pragmatic world of practice." p. 150

a corporate expat in Sweden, told me he feels perfectly content to remain in his position “until someone kicks me out”. He knew that that time was approaching – his department had recently been identified as one of the lowest earners at the university and was likely to be dismantled within the next year. But at the time of our conversation, he was happy to stay put:

I would say laziness is the biggest factor which is keeping me here. I am comfortable. I think that’s the reason. And I am comfortable not because of IVU, I think I am comfortable because of Vietnam; the people, easiness of life, you don’t have to struggle. And that’s why I would say that the things that are changing [ie. The Restructure at IVU] are not destroying me, in fact, they are kicking my ass to, you know, start thinking about the future, you know? Fighting for better things again. In that case, my ambitions of earning more money and better life would kick in, that hunger for better life, better money, you know, better resources for things. But here, there is a lot of comfort. Yeah.

David — lecturer, non-white, male, mid-40s

As a consequence of its global positioning, IVU is a space that is, and always has been, defined by its constant and precarious state of flux. It exists as a foreign campus in Vietnam only at the pleasure of the Vietnamese government and could almost as easily be shut down at their pleasure. The students move through more rapidly than at most universities — if one undertakes a full-time degree for three semesters a year, then what is ordinarily a three-year bachelor degree can be completed in two. Perhaps even more significant, foreign staff can only be employed on two-year maximum contracts. Even the buildings, which (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) are sleek and modern and architecturally-designed to silkily whisper “Western prestige” to anyone who sees them, are rumoured to be built on a swamp and are therefore slowly sinking. The growing cracks in some of the walls and concrete pillars give stock to this theory. However, as IVU has come to be more aligned with the neoliberal ideologies behind the marketisation and privatisation of higher education, the core discourse of precarity has changed from “What can I do to secure my position here?” to “I’ll just hang in there till something better comes along”.

For what it’s worth, Kai is still at IVU and has just had her first book, based on her PhD thesis, published. Her two-year contract will expire soon, leaving her with decisions to make about her future in Vietnam; however, she has been promoted to a

research coordinator position that allows her to reshape her department's "culture of anti-intellectualism" from within. Molly and Harvey did choose to take early retirement and headed back to the UK at the end of 2016. They have since been invited to return to IVU as visiting professors when appropriate intensive courses arise. The appropriate courses have not yet arisen, however. David left IVU early in 2018 to go back into an industry position. As a pracademic, he had more options for employment in Vietnam than his academic peers and has now opted to remain in Vietnam where he can continue to enjoy his comfortable life.

Conclusion

There are aspects of all academic jobs that are not particularly substantive, and there is some evidence to suggest that these tasks are becoming more pervasive in universities every year (Graeber, 2018). Throughout my fieldwork, I observed the academics of IVU become increasingly more convinced that, rather than being educators, they were actually helping to recruit students merely to perpetuate the campus's existence in Vietnam. Or, rather than being researchers, that they were merely accumulating publications that would allow IVU to claim Tier 1 status amongst Vietnamese universities, therefore perpetuating the campus's existence in Vietnam. And the more convinced they were of this, the more the discourses of crisis around breakage and overwork were amplified.

I contend that these negative affective swirls of crisis discourse are problematic for neoliberal universities like IVU (and perhaps all contemporary universities), which run on the unpaid labour made possible through the emotional investment of their staff. This is, of course, a form of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983/2012), specifically, what Rowland (2008) refers to as "intellectual love": a "desire to identify oneself with [that] aspect of the infinite world in which the search for knowledge can never be complete. The more one knows, however, the more one's capacity for intellectual love is enhanced," (Rowland, 2008, p. 354). Sociologist of Higher Education Eva Bendix Petersen's (2009, 2011) work in Australian universities has indicated, however, that this intellectual love that most academics start out with is diminished as they need to do increased identity work, trying to bring their belief in the value of higher education into

alignment with the auditing requirements of the neoliberal university, or conversely, working to resist this pull.

To conclude, in this chapter I have argued that the increased need to produce marketable academic authenticity has catalysed several new discourses of crisis on the IVU campus, beyond and in addition to those present in other multicultural or neoliberalised global workplaces. I have demonstrated how a major, neoliberally-oriented, yet arguably necessary restructure acted as a breaking point, changing the way that academics at the campus viewed the university and themselves as academics. I have posited that these crisis discourses are also acts of resistance against what Ahmed (2012) calls the “language of happiness” and that this has sparked a range of negative effects for the academics and for the university. On the IVU campus, I argue that the discourses of crisis are magnified because academic staff feel that the work they are doing is no longer valued, while at the same time, their ability to convey an *image* of the ideal academic to prospective student-customers has increased in value. As the university’s form has become its substance and vice versa, staff experience identity crises that make discourses of crisis ever more prevalent.

In the next chapter, the concluding chapter, I will draw together all the arguments I’ve made about marketable authenticity throughout this thesis, creating a semantic map that may allow marketable authenticity to become a transferrable construct.

Concluding Chapter: The scope and bounds of marketable authenticity

Introduction

It has now been two years and eight months since I began my fieldwork in 2016, and over that period, a lot has changed at IVU. I had 19 academic key informants (including formal shadowees and interviewees, as well as those who just let me do "deep hanging out" with them on a regular basis, as Geertz (1998) would have put it). Of these 19, only seven now remain at IVU — 36%. Some have moved back to their home countries. Some have opted to remain as foreign academics but in new countries. Some have moved out of academia but stayed in Vietnam, while others have moved into industry positions in other parts of the world.

Of my 26 non-academic informants (most who only gave me one-off interviews), eight staff remain, or 31%. This 26 includes the full membership of the President's Executive Group as it stood in 2016 — of those 12 members, more than half are now gone. From the accounts I've heard from both academic and non-academic survivors, as well as others who have left in the last 12 months, the IVU of 2018 is a vastly different place again to the IVU of my fieldwork. I got a message on Facebook in July 2018, for example, asking if I had heard about "the coup":

Facebook Friend: I assume you heard about the coup by [Home Campus]?

Jodie: Hey there – no? Coup? What coup??

Facebook Friend: [Home Campus] took back control. Teaching and Learning staff mostly left. President is now Asia Strategy with only Marie in Marketing reporting to her. All Heads of School report to Home Campus. Turns out court cases, RateMyEmployer reviews and 2 abysmal staff surveys, combined with the PE [President's Executive] not understanding basic finance matters... At least 4 horrible women gone so far (sorry, but this was a reverse glass ceiling where women in leadership were encouraged by the

president not to reflect on their actions, so men don't see it as a weakness). Just two PE members that I don't like to go!

Jodie: WTF!?!?! I can't believe I hadn't heard any of that! Wow... that is a LOT to take in!

Facebook Friend: Oh and btw, I leave in 10 weeks for a postdoc in [country] with 80% research time of my choosing...I'm back!!! So happy to escape this hell!

Jodie: Congrats, that's so great!

Facebook Friend: So happy. And the karma. The karma is good for the most self-indulgent managers ever. Read the reviews by lecturers on Ratemyemployer!!! Very interesting for you...

Facebook Friend, academic, white, male

I did read the Ratemyemployer reviews, and he was right, they were scathing, using words like "poor", "incompetent" and "unethical" to describe management, and "heavy" "7 days a week", "assembly-line" and "barely keeping our heads above water" to describe the workload. One, in particular (See Figure 15, over page), caught my eye, as it touched on many of the arguments made in this thesis, albeit in a much angrier tone. The language of this anonymous reviewer is telling — phrases like, "a sham university" and "looks like a university [until you] step through the looking glass" imply that IVU does not meet the criteria for genuine academic authenticity. The discourse of overwork is prevalent in phrases like "worked to death", "all-consuming" and "you will be exploited". Concerns about feminisation and infantilisation are implied in the phrases, "you won't even be treated like an adult" and "Heads of Schools essentially function like hall monitors". And the tension between academic authenticity and neoliberal logics are evident in the sentence, "the teaching staff in this university are capable, talented people... but the leadership, on the other hand, is too busy counting their money".

Another friend and ex-participant who left IVU at the beginning of 2018 sent me a newspaper article from a Western news outlet in August, confirming that the Home Campus was indeed taking control of IVU, as my friend above had indicated. The article said that centralising control was a means of getting more value out of their branch campuses. It implied that staff morale was low, leaders felt isolated and unsupported and pointed out that student enrolments had only increased by 1% in 12 months,

"Academics: you don't want to work here, students study elsewhere"



Former Employee - Anonymous Employee

Doesn't Recommend

Negative Outlook

Disapproves of CEO

Pros

The food is above average.

Cons

This is a sham university. It is one of these places that CNN and other news outlets would do a special on. On the outside, it may look like a university, but once you step through the looking glass, you see that it is run by a collection of under (not qualified/not competent/not to be taken seriously) qualified hacks. The management uses their positions as a way to leverage power over others while they take credit for anything that the academic staff accomplish.

Let's be clear: the teaching staff in this university are capable, talented people. That is where the talent is in the university. They easily run circles around the very people who are supposed to be "leaders" in the industry. But the leadership, on the other hand, is too busy counting their money while contributing nothing to the core business of the university.

Secondly, if you work here, you will be worked to death. The job of simply keeping up with classes and marking will become all consuming and all encompassing in terms of your day-to-day life. You will feel exploited. You will be exploited. You will be expected to put up with it, and be silent. You will not be respected; heck, you won't even be treated as an adult. Heads of Schools essentially function as hall monitors who go around with clip boards making sure that everyone is producing their share of widgets every day.

Show Less

Advice to Management

[REDACTED] is not a mirage: it's more like a fog. You know, the kind that dominates the skyline in Beijing. The only way that anything will improve here is for all the management to leave. Just leave. Don't say goodbye, just go. You're respected by no one.



Helpful (7)



Figure 15: Screenshot of a Ratemyemployer review from 2018

according to the IVU 2017 annual report, having been severely hampered by local competition. As a consequence, the branch campus had only delivered a profit⁵⁷ of USD 1.5million in 2017, compared to USD 4.1million in 2016. "It's sad," my friend lamented over Messenger. "People are gossiping about how Home Campus is seeing the whole management at IVU as redundant. It's sad to see IVU imploding like this."

It made me sad too. As I've discussed throughout this thesis, there was nobody at IVU that I met and thought, "*You* are the problem," or "You're a *bad* person". The academic managers and executives who were getting such a bad rap on RateMyEmployer, for the most part, seemed to be doing the best they could under the same difficult circumstances as their academic employees when I observed them. So were the academics. But the material and affective realities of the context meant that very few people in the university felt that they were able to meet their potential.

The Work of this Thesis

In this ethnography of practice, I have argued that the combination of global and neoliberal forces acting on a university campus catalyses decision-making practices that actively exploit the academic workforce, and especially the foreign academic workforce. This is not only in terms of the substantive work that foreign academics do but also because of the symbolism that their existence has for student-customers and their parents. In my field site, this symbolism, used by IVU to demonstrate the university's "world-class" educational quality to a range of external stakeholders, was manifest in a range of proxy indicators. These included the high number of white (and therefore Western) academics and the higher ratio of male academics compared to female academics, as well as the ability of those academics to "entertain" students and "keep them happy".

While this left many academics feeling that their appearance was of higher value to the university than their academic ability, IVU needed to present these indicators to the

⁵⁷ It may come as some surprise to hear that IVU turned a profit at all, considering the dire forecasts that have been discussed throughout this thesis by a range of stakeholders. I was confused by this myself, given that all respondents that I spoke to about university finances told me that IVU had never turned a profit because all revenue had to be channelled back into the upkeep of the university. Perhaps this is simply an error of term usage on the part of either my respondents or the newspaper (I'm not sure which), but as I no longer have access to those high-level respondents, I can't confirm this.

public in order for the public to agree that IVU was an "authentic" example — and therefore both a traditional and an ideal example — of Western education, and bestow prestige upon the campus accordingly. This prestige was critical for the university in persuading student-customers and their parents to commit to the enormous financial investment of an IVU education. And the university genuinely needed that financial influx to stay afloat, as is evidenced from the numbers above — once the student enrolments stopped coming in, and the profits significantly decreased, the Home Campus seized control and downsized the campus structure, leaving the future of the campus in question.

Although I arrived at IVU with the intention to explore the *invisible* work of being a foreign academic on an international branch campus, time and again I found myself observing and talking about a form of academic work that was highly visible and thoroughly codified in academic job descriptions and performance plans. This was the work of marketing the university. However, it was not only about promoting IVU as a unique entity. Instead, it was about marketing IVU as a symbol of Western prestige, allowing the campus to draw on the prestige network of famous Western universities like Harvard. To do this, IVU needed to be seen as an authentic member of this elite group. As posited by Vannini and Williams (2009/2016), authenticity is not a fixed notion; it is "socially constructed, evaluative and mutable" (p. 3), and it is, therefore, more important to ask "how authenticity is made meaningful" (p. 13) than it is to ask what authenticity means. For Vietnamese student-customers and their parents to make sense of IVU as a prestigious Western university, they required evidence that would make the idea of a Western university campus in Vietnam legible to them, thus creating a need for the university to produce marketable academic authenticity. With these premises in mind, this thesis has addressed three significant findings.

1. Global neoliberalism creates cultural and economic conditions that force affected universities into creating marketable authenticity.

As I showed in Chapters 1 and 2, IVU had not always been so heavily influenced by neoliberal logics as it appeared to be in 2016. While having a Vietnamese branch campus had always been a symbolic way for the Home Campus to demonstrate their "global outlook" and rank highly on the internationalisation criteria of global ranking systems, IVU was to a large extent left to operate on its own terms. Most of the academic

staff were happy with their status as educators, while the segment of staff who did undertake research knew that it was optional. However, when the President's Executive Group realised that the campus would have to be closed down unless they could rapidly implement drastic changes, the conditions of academic employment had to be altered by necessity. As demonstrated most clearly in *Chapter 2: Producing Authenticity, Seeking Prestige and Marketing to the Masses*, neoliberal logics around marketisation, commodification and competition (Phelan, 2014) all became paramount in rebuilding the necessary prestige to increase student enrolments and save the campus.

In order to then ensure that these new logics were being upheld, an additional neoliberal ideology came further to the fore — that of audit culture. While performance reviews and KPIs had always been a part of the IVU landscape, these now became stricter, more directly enforced, and significantly more related to marketing the university. Many of the academics felt that this was emblematic of the lack of trust that the President's Executive placed in the academic staff. I would suggest that the logic was not as *human* as this. Instead, I would argue that the President's Executive knew that their academics, particularly their foreign academics, were their best "physical touchpoint" to hark back to marketing manager Trang's words from Chapter 3. In other words, of all the marketing materials that they had available to persuade student-customers and their parents that IVU provided an authentic Western education experience, their academics topped the list, meaning that they needed to be kept in a presentable condition. I contend, therefore, that the introduction of the new and more stringent KPIs did not merely indicate that management wished to reduce academic autonomy (although as I argued in Chapter 5, this was also to the PE's advantage in making the university easier to manage). It also signified a somewhat ruthless pragmatism that was nonetheless linked to saving the university from extinction.

2. The drive to seek prestige by producing marketable authenticity leads global, neoliberal universities to put too much focus on proxy indicators of educational quality, while more traditional academic values recede in importance.

Having established that the production of marketable academic authenticity had become essential under the neoliberal logics that had been employed to save the campus, I then demonstrated how marketable authenticity was constituted on the IVU campus. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explored in detail how IVU creates and promotes proxy

indicators such as the whiteness of the academics and the facilities, the masculine traits associated with academia, and the prestige associated with wealth and entertainment value in the classroom.

In *Chapter 3: Performing Whiteness*, I explored how enactments of ethnoracial whiteness had become more valued and valuable than intellect, teaching ability or research prowess at IVU. And because realities are always being made from the actants that are available, the emphasis on whiteness had catalysed a change in what constituted academic labour. Rather than academic work being only about what an academic *did*, the emphasis on whiteness also turned academic work (for those able to pull it off) into what an academic *looked like*, and how much "white capital" they had been able to collect and convey to others. For academics whose identities had been tied up with their "intellectual love" (Rowland, 2008) for the life of the mind, this exploitation on behalf of the university catalysed a critical and constant need for foreign academics, particularly white academics, to do identity repair work. Masculinity was another form of capital from which the university drew to produce marketable academic authenticity, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4. Combining whiteness and masculinity with a university-sanctioned version of "authentic" academic professionalism allowed IVU to sell the idea that they employed the "ideal academics" for delivering Western education. However, again, the notions of professionalism that had been legitimised by the university's elites (Bourdieu, 1984) were in conflict with notions of academic professionalism held by academics who believed in the triadic mission of higher education — to teach, to research, and to preserve the academy through academic service.

3. Putting too much focus on marketable authenticity leads to a range of unexpected and unintended consequences for individuals, faculties and universities.

The identity work that was catalysed on the IVU campus by treating academics as marketing materials created a range of other effects that the university could not have intended. In Chapter 3, for example, I explored how whiteness granted privilege, allowing white people (and those who had accumulated white capital even if they were not "ethnoracially assigned as white", as Brodtkin (1998) might describe it, to "get away with things" that their Vietnamese counterparts could not. It sometimes even allowed them to get away with things that they could not have done at home without censure.

Masculinity was similarly privileged at IVU, as was demonstrated in *Chapter 4: A Safe Space for Misogyny? Exploring masculine privilege and anxiety*. Drawing on philosopher Kate Manne's (2017) ameliorative exposition on misogyny, I explored how many of the men at IVU used misogynistic behaviours to maintain their position at the top of the IVU hierarchy. As with the use of whiteness as a form of capital, masculinity was a resource that could be drawn on to help men (and occasionally women who had accumulated male capital) to achieve their goals. However, sometimes these goals involved behaviours that these same men would not have engaged in "back home". Thus, one of the unintended consequences of privileging proxy indicators such as whiteness and masculinity in pursuit of marketable academic authenticity was that some (particularly white) men developed a sense of entitlement that contributed to a misogynistic environment on the IVU campus.

Chapter 5: Professionalism at Work showed how focusing on particular displays of professionalism as a proxy indicator of quality forced academics to create a facade of competence, particularly during the early days at IVU when they were experiencing the chaos of arrival and adjustment. Because most newcomers rapidly realised that their value lay in their ability to sell academic authenticity to external stakeholders, these new academics felt even greater pressure than they otherwise might have to socialise into their new environment and correctly replicate "the way things are done around here". This pressure had a range of effects, from creating a tighter than usual bond between academic staff than most had experienced on other university campuses, to increasing levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

These notions surrounding chaos and pressure then led into *Chapter 6: How Marketable Authenticity Creates Discourses of Crisis*, in which I laid out various specific types of crisis discourse that had emerged and are now prevalent at IVU. The first is the one described in Chapter 5, regarding the chaos that most foreign academics experience when they first arrive in Vietnam. This, I argued, was relatively benign, necessary even for processing the experience of academic mobility. However, the increased adherence to neoliberal logics at IVU following The Restructure of 2014 had led to the emergence of two new crisis discourses. One, I am calling the discourse of breakage, borrowing

from Sara Ahmed's definition of crisis as having "reached a breaking point [that] threatens a life, or a dream, or a hope." (Ahmed, 2017, p. 187). This discourse was embedded in, and emerged from, the grief and trauma reactions of the academics who had been affected, directly or indirectly, by The Restructure. The final one was what I am calling a discourse of overwork, similar to that experienced in highly neoliberalised universities the world over.

Thus, in spite of the necessity catalysed by the decision to employ neoliberal logics in saving IVU from imminent closure, this particular combination of actants on and *of* the IVU campus were producing various effects that were not in the best interest of the campus, nor in the best interest of the academics who worked there.

Marketable Authenticity: Creating a Construct

In traditional uses of Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005), one would likely not speak of "a construct" which exists outside of or beyond the effects of a particular moment being made. However, throughout this thesis, I have argued that ideas and concepts themselves are actants that have the power to do things and make change within a network. Thus, I do subscribe to the value of developing constructs that, despite being overly simplistic, still have explanatory power within a network. Philosopher Mario Bunge, in his *Treatise on a Basic Philosophy* (1974), describes a construct as one might describe an architect's scale model:

...what characterises a conceptual language is that some of its expressions symbolise ideas...the real thing is far more complex but, if we want to theorise, we must start by building more or less sketchy models: once the modelling is underway we may contemplate complication and articulation. (Bunge, 1974, p. 13)

Thus, in this section, I wish to move away from the narrower notion of marketable *academic* authenticity, and use the work done by this thesis to tease out and nail down what a construct called marketable authenticity might look like and how it could be used in other, non-academic contexts. I contend that the need to produce marketable authenticity is indelibly linked to neoliberal logics. In my own field site, IVU had reached a tipping point in which producing marketable authenticity had become, in many instances, the highest priority. However, I would speculate that any institution,

organisation or sector that is influenced by neoliberal ideologies would have a need to produce marketable authenticity to greater or lesser extents. Therefore, outlining a clear definition for marketable authenticity, drawing the scope conditions for where and when the construct could be used, and situating it within a semantic network of other related constructs may allow marketable authenticity to be translatable into other contexts and environments.

Defining Marketable Authenticity

According to Suddaby (2010), the provision of a good definition is critical to the creation of a construct that can be reliably used in building theory. A good definition does three things. First, it captures the essence and character of the phenomena being considered. Second, it avoids tautology by ensuring that none of the terms used to describe the construct is part of the construct itself (for example, saying that authenticity is the act of being authentic). Third, it concisely outlines the essential characteristics of the construct. I have attempted to achieve these three aims in the box inset:

A definition of Marketable Authenticity

Marketable authenticity is a phenomenon that is intentionally produced by an assemblage of human and non-human actors and organisational processes to convince relevant stakeholders that they are seeing or experiencing an "authentic" — that is, a valued and ideal — form of the good or service they are being persuaded to purchase. Let's unpack each of the ideas in this definition sequentially.

- **Marketable:** An object or idea that can be "sold", either literally or metaphorically, to another or to ones' self.
- **Authenticity:** a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. (Vannini & Williams, 2009/2016, p. 3)
- **Phenomenon:** the object of a person's perception
- **Intentional:** done on purpose; deliberate
- **Produce:** to make or manufacture from components or raw materials
- **Assemblage:** a provisional assembly (collection - my addition) of productive, heterogeneous and (this is the crucial point) quite limited forms of ordering located in no larger overall order. (Law, 2009, p. 146)

- Actors: objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, 'nature', ideas, organisations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements (Law, 2009, p. 141)
- Organisation: an organised group of people (and things — my addition) with a particular purpose, such as a business or government department
- Process: a series of actions or steps taken to achieve a particular end
- Convince: cause (someone) to believe firmly in the truth of something
- Stakeholders: anyone who is agreed to have a 'stake' or interest in the organisation and/or its success or failure (Donaldson and Preston, 1995)
- Experience: to encounter with one's body as well as one's mind
- Valued: Both desired and respected
- Ideal: most suitable, optimal, but often only hypothetical
- Form: a particular way in which a thing exists or appears
- Persuade: induce (someone) to do something through reasoning or argument
- Purchase: to acquire (something) by paying for it; to buy; to obtain or achieve with effort or suffering.

(All definitions derived from the Oxford Dictionary of English (OED) 2010 unless stated otherwise.)

The Scope Conditions of Marketable Authenticity

Because constructs in the social sciences are often highly contingent and context-dependent, Suddaby (2010) argues that providing an overview of the scope conditions — that is to say, the "contextual conditions under which a proposed construct will or will not adhere" (p. 349) is essential in its development. Constraints related to the way the construct interacts with temporal conditions, with some spaces but not others, and with some types of people but not others, all need to be taken into account.

Time

The marketable authenticity construct, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, is "incrementally temporal" (Suddaby, 2010, p. 350) — that is to say that the need for marketable authenticity increases over time, if there is an increasing need to make money (which, in a neoliberal environment, there always is). In the context of a global, neoliberal international branch campus, the context described in this thesis, this

need to make money is also tied to the need to "appear global" (or Western/white), which is perhaps the most critical Unique Value Proposition that the university purports to offer. However, as mentioned, the focus in this equation is actually on an increasing need for money, not on increasing time. Thus, I should note that there are also "discontinuous temporal conditions" (Suddaby, 2010, p. 350) that can cause spikes in the need to produce marketable authenticity — Open Day or Graduation Day events for example, as we saw in Chapter 2, catalyse a surge in the production of marketable authenticity as a prestige-seeking behaviour.

Space and Place

I would postulate that marketable authenticity can apply in any context in which a valued ideal is being promoted and sold in exchange for something else (whether that something else is monetary or whether it is goods/services provided in-kind). To take an example outside of academia, one could look to the worldwide phenomena of competition for development funding, both from governments and from individual donors. As McCarthy (2016) convincingly argues, development agencies rely on the artefacts that their subjects — poverty-stricken children in developing nations, in her example — are able to produce (either through their labour, in the form of artworks, or through their bodies as the subject of photos) as the materials for their marketing campaigns. Marketable authenticity could be applied in this context in the sense that the children chosen to star in campaigns aimed at attracting donor dollars will be selected because they demonstrate an image of what the donors trust to be the most truthful, faithful representation of child poverty. They are not only marketable, which might imply attractive or appealing, they also need to be legibly read as authentic according to the norms the audience is expecting to see. They cannot, however, be *too* authentic — ie. a genuine example that might conflict with those norms or even upset donors in the wrong way — because they need to convey the message of the campaign. Thus, if the campaign is demonstrating the positive outcomes of the development agency, then it would not do to choose an acutely underweight child to represent this, even if the development agency did not provide nutritional services, because protruding shoulder joints do not convey the visual message of "positive outcome". Conversely, if the message of the campaign was "People in this slum are living in abject poverty; please donate to this emergency relief fund NOW" then it would not do to show images of

laughing children showing off their latest artworks, irrespective of how cute and appealing those children may be.

People

The third scope condition concerns the question of to whom the construct does and does not apply. To answer this, I would return to the notion discussed throughout this thesis of capital accumulation. According to my suppositions, marketable authenticity can be produced by anyone with the forms of capital, or with the capacity to *build* the kinds of capital, that are considered normatively valued and ideal in the relevant context. For example, at IVU, a senior white male academic has extensive capital to draw on inherently, while a younger, Vietnamese female academic (like lecturer Nhieu from Chapters 2, 3 and 6) must accumulate the relevant capital. She might do this via her choice of aesthetic markers (clothes, hairstyle etc.), her language ability (English fluency, version of English accent), and her adherence to Western attitudinal norms (eg. Nhieu being sarcastic and making "snarky" jokes to diffuse conflict with her Western colleagues, a skill that her Vietnamese colleagues do not often employ in English).

It should be noted that the use of the phrase "can be produced" implies a level of intentionality that is not entirely accurate. While some academics at IVU may have been deliberately enhancing their marketable authenticity, it is still possible to produce marketable authenticity without intending to do so. Take the example of a senior white male academic who produces marketable authenticity merely by existing with those characteristics in this time and space. His mere presence at the university provides a resource for IVU to exploit, and they are able to do this by building marketing activities into job descriptions and performance plans. This does not indicate ostensive consent on the academic's behalf, however, because while those mandatory marketing activities do put the academic on display as a prop for Vietnamese audiences to gaze upon and admire, this is not their express or stated purpose.

Marketable Authenticity's Semantic Relationships

In discussing the relationships between constructs, Suddaby (2010) apologises to John Donne and coins the phrase, "no construct is an island...theoretical constructs are suspended in a complex web of references to and relationships with other constructs"

(p. 351). He then describes two kinds of semantic relationship that a researcher should consider when situating their construct within its related network.

The first semantic relationship that Suddaby explores is between previous constructs that have influenced the construct you are trying to develop. For marketable authenticity, this would first be Vannini and Williams' (2009/2016) notion of authenticity as a socially constructed, normative ideal. This is important to the marketable authenticity construct, as it gives it enormous flexibility to transfer across different contexts depending on what the normative ideals of authenticity are in those contexts and what it would take to make an audience persuadable under those circumstances. Next, we can look at the influence of MacCannell's "staged authenticity" (1976/1999, 2008, 2011), and the way that, in tourism, "fake back regions" are created and put on display to tourists to convince them that they are observing "authentic tradition" (MacCannell, 2011, p. 13). This idea translates into marketable authenticity in corporate contexts, where notions of brand ambassadorship can turn employees into the goods for sale. We could also link marketable authenticity to Bernstein's (2007) "bounded authenticity" construct, in which an individual undertakes to enact authenticity to a paying "other" who expects a level of intimacy, but only within the bounds of a transaction — ie. payment, often of a monetary nature, in exchange for just the right amount and type of authenticity and no more. While much of this thesis has been directed at the university's attempts to market itself to prospective customers, bounded authenticity links more to existing customers who have already paid — otherwise known as current students. In Chapter 1, for example, I considered the example of Leila, who produced the wrong kind of authenticity in front of a student by telling him that she was feeling sad and missing her home country. The student did not feel that this type of intimacy was part of the transaction that he was paying for and that Leila had crossed the boundary of authenticity that he was paying to engage with.

The second kind of semantic relationship that Suddaby describes is those that occur with other constructs embedded within your construct, or that your construct is embedded within. For example, as has been discussed, marketable authenticity in the context of IVU is constituted by the production of visible proxy indicators of Western educational quality — they are constructs in themselves, embedded within the

construct of Western educational quality, which in this context constitutes marketable authenticity. Similarly, in McCarthy's (2016) example of the development context, marketable authenticity could be constituted by visible proxy indicators of childhood poverty, or alternatively, of children's agency. These indicators would also be embedded within the construct "childhood poverty" which would be embedded within that context's production of marketable authenticity. Marketable authenticity is also embedded within other constructs — for example, at IVU, marketable authenticity is an essential construct in building a prestige network. In a different context, however, marketable authenticity could be embedded within whatever other outcomes the production of marketable authenticity is aiming to achieve.

Implications and Limitations

There are various implications of this thesis for the global higher education sector. As I have discussed throughout, IVU is not so much *different* to your average neoliberal university, as it is more *extreme*. It is an augury of the future that highly internationalised, neoliberalised universities may expect if they allow the need to produce marketable authenticity to overpower all else.

However, one of the critical moves of this thesis is to lift the layer of blame off individual managers and executives in universities. As I hope this thesis has demonstrated, the structural conditions of global neoliberalism produce a range of effects that then necessitate action on behalf of those responsible for a university's survival and success — the managers. These actions must, therefore, sit within the confines of neoliberal logics to meet the criteria that the global higher education system has set for both survival and success. These logics produce a range of effects. Some of these effects are positive, such as saving the university and subsequently saving the students from the upheaval of having to change university mid-degree, while also saving many of the academics' jobs. Unfortunately, many others are profoundly negative, such as the perceived loss of the academic mission, the subsequent identity work that academics do to cope with that perceived loss, and the crises caused by workplace restructures and a culture of overwork. Nonetheless, the effects are a result of the work being done by and to enact the network that is global higher education, and this work is done not only by humans but also by and within material and ideological

conditions. Thus, in contrast to much of the literature in Critical University Studies (and the views of many academics), I cannot situate the fault for the use of neoliberal logics in higher education with managers. This would be far too simplistic a response to the analyses of this thesis.

Although I have spent much of this chapter demonstrating how I conceive the construct of marketable authenticity as being transferable to other contexts, a word of caution is necessary here. IVU, as an extreme case of global, neoliberal higher education, is still a highly specific organisational environment within a highly specific national environment. Further, in 2016, IVU was populated with a specific combination of humans and non-humans that, as this chapter has demonstrated, are not all present even now. As Fanghanel points out in her exposition on *Being an Academic* (2012), extreme cases are "not necessarily the most apt at providing directions for mainstream situations," (p. 110). Moreover, given that I have expended much energy attempting to persuade you that realities are made from moment to moment out of the actants that are present and activated, it would be disingenuous to now claim that my observations of IVU from 2016 would be the same today, in late 2018.

However, as I have said elsewhere, my goal with this thesis was not to prove something to the reader — it was to provoke new ways of thinking about higher education. If my analyses of my field site have stimulated you to consider your own workplace in a different light or your field site from a different perspective, then I have achieved my goal. As Fanghanel (2012) also points out, following on from her previous quote that extreme cases may not be fully generalisable: "they can serve to illustrate a range of possibles, and broaden the horizon of potentialities for thinking about higher education," (p. 110) and this is the limit of my ambition here.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis then, let us return briefly to our opening question: why do stock photos, such as the one pictured over the page, exist?



Figure 16: Repeat of Figure 1: Stock photo labelled "Students watching lecturer in the lab."

The answer, I would say, is that stock photos like this one reflect the norms that have been established around any given concept, allowing us to find, at the press of a button, an ideal representation of anything we may wish to represent. In a neoliberal environment, authenticity is billed as the one thing that can't be bought, but it is, in fact, the key thing for which people are usually willing to shell out their hard-earned cash. In an environment like that, is it any wonder that we have prodigiously-sized stock image databases overflowing with representations of the kind of authenticity you can purchase if only you have the right kind of funds? The demand that academics produce the living, breathing pantomimes of these stock images, acting them out on behalf of their universities to a critical paying public, is becoming ever more familiar in contemporary universities. It is somewhat disturbing to consider how this will continue to reshape the academic profession. However, in the words of Welsh lecturer Carl:

"That's the modern university, right?"

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Appendix A: Demographics of Academics at IVU

Snapshot of March 2016

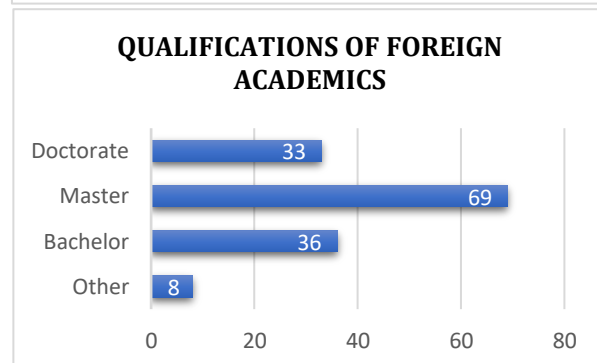
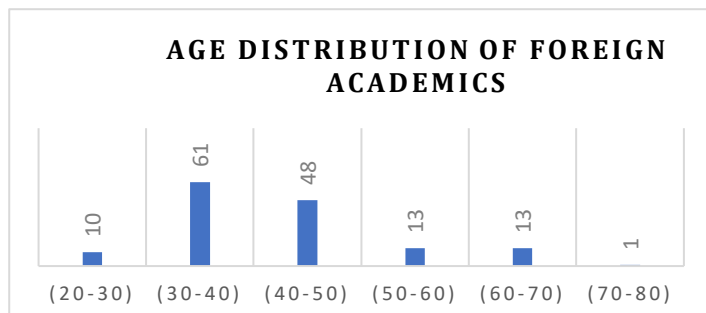
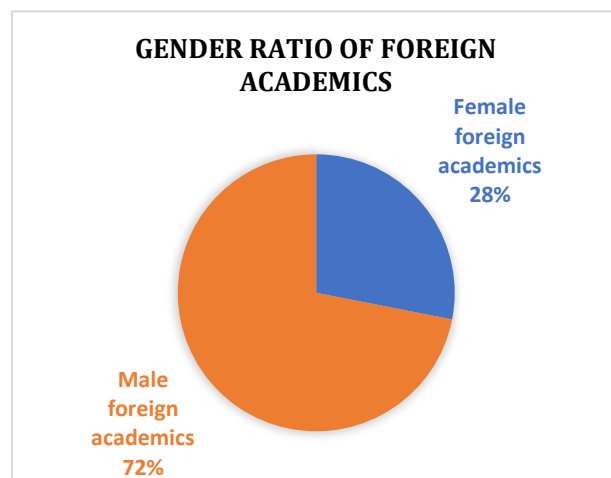
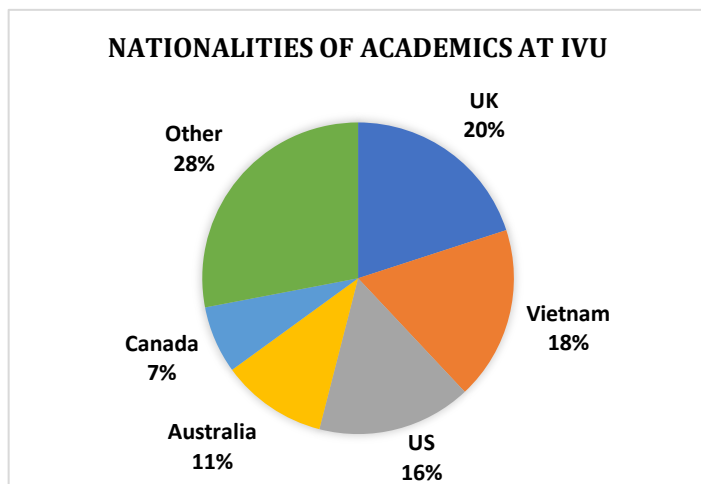
- 178 academics from 29 countries
- 82% foreign academics, 18% Vietnamese academics

Foreign Academic Demographics

- Gender ratio almost 4:1 male:female
- Just over 20% of foreign academics held doctorate degrees
- 75% between 30 and 50 years old

Turnover Stats

- 92 foreign academics left IVU between March 2015 & March 2016.
- 92 = 44% of all academics, 52% foreign academics in 1 year.
- 63 academics had been hired to replace them (increasing the ratio of Vietnamese academics to higher than the desired 20/80 split)



Appendix B: Ethics Approval

Human Ethics Protocol 2015/733

aries@anu.edu.au

Mon 23/11/2015 12:01

To: Jodie-Lee Trembath <jodie.trembath@anu.edu.au>

Cc: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au <human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au>; Inger Mewburn <inger.mewburn@anu.edu.au>

THIS IS A SYSTEM-GENERATED E-MAIL. PLEASE DO NOT REPLY. SEE BELOW FOR E-MAIL CONTACT DETAILS.

Dear Ms Jodie-Lee Trembath,

Protocol: 2015/733

Shining light into a shadowed hinterland: Articulating the invisible work of foreign academics

I am pleased to advise you that your Human Ethics application received approval by the Chair of the Humanities & Social Sciences DERC on 20/11/15.

For your information:

1. Under the NHMRC/AVCC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research we are required to follow up research that we have approved. Once a year (or sooner for short projects) we shall request a brief report on any ethical issues which may have arisen during your research or whether it proceeded according to the plan outlined in the above protocol.
2. Please notify the committee of any changes to your protocol in the course of your research, and when you complete or cease working on the project.
3. Please notify the Committee immediately if any unforeseen events occur that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the research work.
4. Please advise the HREC if you receive any complaints about the research work.
5. The validity of the current approval is five years' maximum from the date shown approved. For longer projects you are required to seek renewed approval from the Committee.

All the best with your research,

Human Ethics Manager
Research Ethics
Research Integrity & Compliance
Ground Floor
Chancelry Lower10B
The Australian National University
Acton ACT 2601
T: 6125-3427
E: human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au
W: <http://researchservices.anu.edu.au/ori/human/index.php>

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

[Sample] Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Introduction to Communications at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] Vietnam

How would you describe the role of Communications at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] Vietnam?

What was the mandate you were given when you stepped into the Director of Communications role?

Are there additional things you do that aren't on your job description? Has that mandate grown or changed?

What do you see as the key challenges faced by academics here at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] Vietnam?

Do you think there are challenges that differ for the foreign and local academics?

Impacts of internal communications

Internal communication is a recurring theme at any university, or any organisation. Do you think the communication needs of the academics here differ from the needs of academics elsewhere?

What impacts do you think internal communications currently have at the university?

Do you think the IC here has an impact on the way that the staff interact with each other, or with the students? Could it? Should it?

There's some research that says internal communication becomes one of the key drivers of adjustment for expatriate staff in a university. Do you think that is the case here? Do you find the expat staff more or less hungry for information?

Satisfaction with internal communications

How do you feel the internal communications here are received by the staff?

Given my focus in my project is on the expat academics, have you noticed any differences in their communication wants/needs, compared to the Vietnamese staff? Examples? How about between expat academics and expat professional staff? Examples?

Do you think satisfaction with internal communications over the last 3 years or so has gone up or down? Why? Is that the same across the different groups at the university, or do some groups seem to feel one way and others another way?

Decision Making at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] VN

How do decisions about communication policy and communication processes get made at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] Vietnam? I know you're a member of the PE – do decisions start there, or with your staff, or with other members of the university coming to you? And then where do they go next?

Summing up

Given everything we've talked about today, if you had to sum up, what would you say are the main challenges faced by the Communications department at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] Vietnam?

Given the focus of my research, is there anything else you think I ought to know or you would like to talk about before we finish up?

Appendix D: Sample Transcript

Sample Transcript

Speaker 1: Okay. Oh, this is my backup. And I'll be asking questions also about what communications is here, what it does. And because my focus is on expat academics –

Speaker 2: Is that an electronic pen?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: So, you write in that and then you stick it in your – how does it work?

Speaker 1: It's now recording. And while I write –

Speaker 2: It records what you write?

Speaker 1: It makes a note of what I was writing while it was recording. I don't record every time, quite often I just write.

Speaker 2: Bloody hell. That's just a smart little gadget.

Speaker 1: It is. And then afterwards I plug it into the computer and it uploads the whole writing thing.

Speaker 2: What are these things called? Never mind the interview.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's right. It's called a Livescribe Echo.

Speaker 2: Livescribe Echo. Okay, I'll get that looked up and –

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's pretty good. And then you hit a button and it turns it all into typing.

Speaker 2: Wow. That's exactly what I need.

Speaker 1: I know. It's very cool. Yeah. So, because I am looking at academics and expats academics, so I am particularly asking about internal comms, but also the external comms as they affect the staff as well.

Speaker 2: Yeah. But remember that I am not an academic anymore.

Speaker 1: I know. That's okay. I am specifically looking for the strategic perspective as well. So, decision-making processes, systems and how those decision making processes and systems interact?

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 1: But also, how sometimes they conflict with each other and how that affects the staff as well. Yeah. So, just maybe a recap on what maybe we were talking about before the tape went on. We were sort of talking about the idea that the expat bubble is perhaps – when you get to a certain age, the bubble pops.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean I think the big problem – the big problem in expatriate life, it doesn't matter whether it's academics, but my life has been in education, is that people don't – NAME OF UNIVERSITY again, is slightly different – but people don't have pressures to advance their careers the way that they have in – if you are say in NAME OF COUNTRY. So, people wake up and they have not done a PhD, like I mean I woke up and just thought "I haven't done a PhD". There was a lot of opportunities to do it. I mean I went down the book writing route which at the time was the route to go down, but in retrospect it was probably the wrong choice. I've been lucky, at my age we can get away with it, but a lot of people become – they wake up and they realize that they have not taken the opportunities that they've had - again, NAME OF UNIVERSITY is quite different, but most expats, the thing you have most of is time and it's using that time wisely, which most people don't do unless you consider going to the Best of New York Club every day as wise use of time. So, it is that realization.

And it's – it's very, very tough for a lot of people because to a lot of the world – take NAME OF COUNTRY. You've worked at NAME OF UNIVERSITY Vietnam, so *why* did you work at NAME OF UNIVERSITY Vietnam? No matter what anybody says to you, the bottom line is you couldn't get a job in NAME OF COUNTRY. So, you are at the back of the queue, [Unintelligible audio 00:03:19] when it comes to going for another job unless you've been somebody who's done a lot of research and made an impact. And NAME OF PERSON would be a good example of that. I know you don't want personal names here, but he would be a good example of somebody who actually thrived as an expat, but actually had his eye perhaps not on going back to NAME OF COUNTRY, but on his own adventure.

Speaker 1: On his own adventure.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: I guess there is subtle association [sic] with being an expat that you perhaps, like when you tell people back in your home country, 'Oh, I live in Vietnam.' 'Oh, you live in Vietnam? That's amazing.'

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: People treat you differently for that.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

- Speaker 1: And then you reach a certain age and realize that perhaps that's not enough or that's not the identity that you thought you were crafting.
- Speaker 2: Yeah. And it doesn't have to be sort of in their 40s, or 50s, it could be 30s; they could be 35, the English teachers. And I've had a lot to do with them in my life because it's not really – there aren't really the career opportunities in the English language and it's so easy to drift that people sometimes get a real – a real shock. And so, 'my god, what am I doing? I've lived in eighteen different countries, but so what?'
- Speaker 1: And I guess it's the 'so what', isn't it?
- Speaker 2: Yeah.
- Speaker 1: While you are doing it, it feels like it's an important thing to do.
- Speaker 2: Yeah. But it's only – it's only exotic if you are not doing it. So, people tell you, 'Oh, you've led a really exotic life.' Well, it's a life I chose for me. It's a life I enjoy. But it's only exotic if you are not actually doing it.
- Speaker 1: Yeah. Exotic means different. It's not different to what you are doing.
- Speaker 2: I mean living in an apartment in NAME OF CITY can be, at the moment – it's just so exotic. Thank god. [Unintelligible audio 00:05:09].
- Speaker 1: Certainly would be different. Okay. All right. So, within all of that is kind of a context I guess. You've said a couple of times already that NAME OF UNIVERSITY is quite a different environment to what you've seen in other places.
- Speaker 2: Yes.
- Speaker 1: In what ways would you say it's different?
- Speaker 2: I think for a whole variety of reasons; a. It's NAME OF COUNTRY. So, it's – there is a – although there is a Vietnamese culture here, there is also a very strong NAME OF COUNTRY culture. I think over the past couple of years there has been – maybe since I've been here actually – there has actually been a feeling of professional development. I don't think many took advantage of it. But it was certainly, certainly, it was certainly there. The other thing I think is that people work a lot harder than they do in most expat environments. And you don't have – maybe English [the English Language Department] again, that's different, but you don't have – in other places you – maybe it doesn't work here actually where people – friends at work and there are friends outside work. And that can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. It can be a bad thing as well. If things are going well then that tends to be really good. If things are going bad, while there is a support

mechanism there, it can very often be an almost self-perpetuating and – because people just sit there and give each other the bad news. They just repeat the bad news over more and more beers.

Speaker 1: Like an echo.

Speaker 2: And what was actually a little bit of bad news, by the end of the night is a disaster.

Speaker 1: Yeah, true.

Speaker 2: And we've seen that in restructures that have happened – that have happened here. So, I think – I think that makes it a little bit different. But I think the main difference is the fact that it's a NAME OF COUNTRY institution. I think the other thing is that people are not necessarily – I mean it's the same in education everywhere – but people aren't necessarily very highly paid. So, that – so that [Unintelligible audio 00:07:14]. So, you don't have the expensive expat hobbies here that you have in other places like boats and sort of parachuting and various other things.

Speaker 1: Wow. Expats go parachuting?

Speaker 2: And [Unintelligible audio 00:07:27] every night at the beach, but that's because we've got no beach. Yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, it's interesting [Unintelligible audio 00:07:36] since the interview, but that's maybe the fourth time I've heard you mention alcohol, is that something you notice a lot here, specifically, or is that an expat thing?

Speaker 2: I think it is a – I think it is an expat thing. I think it's a – I think for a lot of people – again, and I've had chats with SOS [the university's on-campus medical centre] about this as well, that people live in an expat environment and they don't actually have the constraints that they have at home. And I mean, if you look here, I mean people drink and drive. And people come into work and they announce proudly that they've got a hangover.

Speaker 1: Wow.

Speaker 2: Which I find really, really – and don't get me wrong, I am not puritan. I mean people can get the best of [Unintelligible audio 00:08:25] if they want. But if you've got a hangover, don't tell anybody. Just keep it quiet. So, that kind of – but I am saying it's really open. That kind of alcohol adolescence that you think you'd grow out of as a NAME OF COUNTRY kid in their twenties gets actually perpetuated. And I was in the UK a couple of weeks ago and I was talking to a friend in London who spent his entire life as an expatriate and he just retired. And

he said to me, he said, you know, he said, 'This has been a real shock because I've had to grow up.' And he's lived a sort of "life of Riley" around the world and probably got those 'how many kids in how many countries'.

Speaker 1: Oh, wow.

Speaker 2: [Unintelligible audio 00:09:13] but it's this sort of perpetual adolescence that you can get away with as an expat that you could never get away with. You could never – and so, I think alcohol's – I think alcohol's part of that.

Speaker 1: So, given what you've said about NAME OF UNIVERSITY being different in terms of having more opportunities for progression and professional development, do you see as much of that here anyway?

Speaker 2: Look, it happens like that. It's not something that – I mean I don't socialize with – I don't think I socialize with anybody actually. I think you might have thought, 'God, this is becoming sad.'

Speaker 1: I'll be crying by the end of it, won't I?

Speaker 2: Yeah, but I don't think it's as bad here. And I think – I mean the alcohol thing and the responsibility thing is another real thing in the expat world that we've never been tested on. Because NAME OF UNIVERSITY gives you the work permit, so you are here for NAME OF UNIVERSITY. If you go on a [Unintelligible audio 00:10:11] someday and get absolutely drunk, at what point does NAME OF UNIVERSITY intervene in that? Now, I think there is only one case where that's happened since NAME OF UNIVERSITY was established, maybe about ten years ago. Somebody was in a fight and the university got told. And they were told to get the guy out of the country.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: Now, again you see that's a very different thing that would happen in NAME OF COUNTRY. I mean if you went out and stabbed somebody, the fact that you work for NAME OF UNIVERSITY would be the bottom paragraph.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Here it would be the first paragraph.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: So, that's another thing that makes your life as an expat very different because you don't have that autonomy that you have in your own country because they are giving – so how much responsibility – how much responsibility do you have at NAME OF UNIVERSITY when you leave here five o'clock at night?

- Speaker 1: So, given your role in communications, what's your view on that?
- Speaker 2: That's a really – it's a really difficult one. I think it should be – and maybe it is now. I think it should be pointed out that fact, but in a very light handed – in a very light handed way. Again, when I was in the Middle East, I mean, I had to go and get people out of a jail, or visit them in jail if they couldn't get out of the jail because the assumption was they work for the ministry of higher education. And so, therefore we were responsible. So, we were responsible for their behavior twenty four hours a day. Now it was never explicitly stated. But it's much easier to kick an expat out of the country than ask to put him in court.
- Speaker 1: Okay.
- Speaker 2: So, we would get them out of the country, we NAME OF UNIVERSITY. So, that's the – so, that's something that is certainly different to living in your own country.
- Speaker 1: Sort of a dual – you are more protected in a way, but you're also a lot more tenuous.
- Speaker 2: And you're – and you're much more exposed.
- Speaker 1: And more exposed. Yeah.
- Speaker 2: I mean four years ago I was walking at the road just where Pizza Hut is [Unintelligible audio 00:12:15] I had my NAME OF UNIVERSITY ruck sack on and this guy [Unintelligible audio 00:12:21] grabbed me from behind and they demanded I 'do something about this'. And I'm like, 'Oh, god, what are you talking about?' I had no idea what 'this' was. And it was somebody in NAME OF UNIVERSITY whom I – I wouldn't mention the name, but I just thought of who it was – had actually ordered the pizza. And when the boy came with the pizza, this staff member just said, 'Look, I'll give you 500,000 dong for a few "extra services"'.
Speaker 1: Huh?
- Speaker 2: So this guy [who had approached him on the street] wasn't worried about that. What *he* was concerned about was that the delivery driver came back forty-five minutes late!
- Speaker 1: Oh, my god.
- Speaker 2: So, I was standing in the street, but this guy, who could speak actually really good English, but it was the NAME OF UNIVERSITY ruck sack – oh and I had the NAME OF UNIVERSITY umbrella. So, it was raining. And you had this situation that, you wouldn't care – nobody would run up to you in a street in NAME OF COUNTRY

and say, 'You are somebody from NAME OF UNIVERSITY.'! So I said, 'Well, there is not much I can do about it.' And he said, 'Well, I need to know who to talk to'.

Speaker 1: And I mean who do you even report something like that to?

Speaker 2: And he probably knows who this guy [the staff member] was.

Speaker 1: Oh, okay.

Speaker 2: And actually –

Speaker 1: So, it was handled – had to be handled in a quiet way?

Speaker 2: I had no idea what to do.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: And so, again you see that would only happen – so, everybody in the organization is responsible, not for the fact that this guy gave the driver 500,000 dong, but for the fact that he came back forty five minutes late and couldn't deliver the next pizza.

Speaker 1: Oh, yes.

Speaker 2: So, it's these little things where you think actually – I mean I just laughed it off, but you think, well, actually that's one of these little gems from the expat life that you just wouldn't get in Australia.

Speaker 1: Yeah, right.

Speaker 2: So, I think that is a very subtle thing that people perhaps are aware of, but they may not want to be aware of, or they actually don't think about it. And again, in education it's not a huge issue because most of the teachers are reasonably responsible. If you are in a place like the Middle East and you are running the oil industry - so, what they do is they have a blanket, no alcohol. They just, you know, you can't put us – you just can't put us at risk. So, it is a risk. It's a risk for the employer. Anyway, that was a long winded answer to a very short question.

Speaker 1: No. But it was a very interesting answer because it makes me wonder then - NAME OF UNIVERSITY's demographic of academic staff that they are employing has changed quite a lot since Gael arrived.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So, I am wondering what impacts young academics, early career academics, perhaps this is their first expat posting, I wonder how they react to that sort of thing because if you've been an expat before you kind of know that "little gems" like that are going to come up.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: And I wonder whether you've seen any response to that kind of quite different life that this is for those new academics?

Speaker 2: I've really not. No. I mean the only – the only thing – and again, [Unintelligible audio 00:15:46] I maybe old, but I am not puritanical – is the way that people watch expats behavior. So, we've had a couple of senior academics here who enjoy going to bars and things. And everybody, all the Vietnamese in the university know about it. They pass judgment. Now, we're talking risk and we talk about major risk. I mean to me this is a huge risk to the institution. But can you really talk about it. What's wrong with a couple of guys going to a girly [sic] bar? Well, actually nothing.

Speaker 1: Except reputation?

Speaker 2: Except reputation. And we have a couple of girls working in there who happen to be our students who are trying to get a bit of money.

Speaker 1: Oh, man.

Speaker 2: So, it's these little things that, you know, if a couple of guys in NAME OF COUNTRY went to a girly bar, a) nobody would know, secondly it would be 'so what'. And it's a little bit 'so what' here. But I noticed my staff, you know, they are all here to meet -- they are all sort of on board with NAME OF UNIVERSITY's western thinking, but they are really puritanical about people's behavior. So, I remember one day we were having a discussion and they had gone on for months about NAME OF PERSON marrying this young woman. And – because they said to me, 'Are you going to go to the wedding?' and I said, 'Well, I won't be here.' And they said, 'Well, that's good because you shouldn't go to that because it's not good because it's demeaning for Vietnamese women.' And I said I don't think it is. But anyway, we had a bit of an argument about it. And then a few months later one of them said to me, 'Well, at least, he married her.' And I said, 'What does that mean?' And they said, 'Well, there are other people in this university, you know, who are doing these things and they are not getting married.' And I said, 'Well, then that's their business.' And they said, 'Well, no, it's not their business. We have to work here.'

And so, you think well, okay, these are puritans and you -- is it something you should be concerned about from a communication perspective? I mean there is a risk. And it's the sort of thing that if somebody wanted to make a fuss about that, they could. They could easily – if somebody wanted to blacken us, they could. It's

just an instrument. So, again, if you were in NAME OF COUNTRY, it wouldn't matter. So, these little things about your responsibility to the organization – and the other thing is that in the expat community that people very often don't realize. An expat community is a very small community and it's very incestuous. So, there are very few secrets in the expat community. So, people will do certain things and will [Unintelligible audio 00:18:48]. I don't know why, I don't know how, but things have just seemed that again if you are living in NAME OF COUNTRY, it wouldn't be seen.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

[MIDDLE OF INTERVIEW REMOVED]

Speaker 2: That would be something – I am not saying for you, but something to look at in the way that people respond to their work environment when they are actually forced to do something.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: As academics aren't usually very good at being told what to do. And so, that also is [Unintelligible audio 00:45:50]. I do my job and I do my job well. I know I do my job well. And I am tired of being told that if I am not here at a certain time, I am not actually doing my job well. So, anyway, I'm leaving. I'll leave it at that.

Speaker 1: No, thank you. That's really interesting. And I will hit you up again.

Appendix E: Sample of Coding for Academic Whiteness Code

Code	Data Type	Sample Excerpt
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Privileges of whiteness	Interview	I mean from a perspective of a local, I do believe this is a racist policy that you get paid differently on the basis of your nationality because if we do the same job it's only fair we get paid the same amount. If we have the same qualifications, if we – it's worse than women getting paid less than men. So, I do believe that that's an unfair policy, but so that's just my philosophy. But on a more personal level I wouldn't necessarily bring that up with an expat colleague because on a personal level we start getting into the details of, you know, specifics of some people may have children, some people may have other things that they need to take care of. So, it's just a conversation that I am not willing to get into with on a personal basis, but on an official capacity I do believe that people should get paid equally if they do the same amount of job with the same qualification.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Privileges of whiteness\Language of whiteness	Interview	That being said, again, I keep coming back to the language where it's fascinating how much language competence in English plays a role in the way your intelligence is perceived.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Privileges of whiteness\Skin colour matters	Interview	Speaker 2: Because we are an international university. And now I am going to talk with, you know, putting on my marketing hat. Parents don't want to see Vietnamese academics in the classrooms. Speaker 1: What gives you that sense? How do you know? Speaker 2: How do I know? Speaker 1: Yeah. Speaker 2: That's – I know because - and maybe it's just because society is as it is. That's a gut feeling that I've just built up over time. Yeah, I mean I couldn't give you data. I couldn't – you know in my opinion on that it may be things like, you know, I couldn't get a job at some of the international schools because I am of Vietnamese descent, doesn't matter that I am American, you know. And that type of racism exists out there, or I don't know if you can call it racism, but it exists. Here, yeah, you know, I am thinking, I am trying to think of anytime when an actual Vietnamese person has actually said that to me and no one has actually ever said that to me. But I know from talking to our marketing department and being in other various meetings talking about staff and profiles that that's something that comes up, you know.

ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Privileges of whiteness\Whiteness as desirable	Interview	Speaker 2: Yeah, definitely, because I think the more problem comes from Vietnamese look up to and admire western cultures for some reason. And I think a lot of that comes down to -- they associate western culture with being wealthy, and which makes sense compared to where the, you know, current countries are, you know, economically and everything like that.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Privileges of whiteness\Whiteness as power	Interview	Speaker 2: But so, I think it's -- it's not a good thing to come to a country where everybody looks up to you and really, you know, you can get away with whatever you want to do and stuff. And you know if it's the other way around, you know, in terms of -- it should be the other way around. It should be, you know, us coming to Vietnam, you know, we -- like I said, we should be the ones making the effort here. But it doesn't seem to happen that way.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Resisting whiteness	Interview	So, yes, I remember this one interaction with a male non-Vietnamese colleague. I was in the kitchen and I was speaking in Vietnamese with the administrative staff. He walked by and he joked, 'This is an English speaking campus.' And so, I joked back, 'Shut up, imperialist.' But yeah, it was kind of one of those things that you just have to roll with in order to not make it awkward. I think it's fair to say it was sort of a joke, but it was sort of not.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\White guilt	Interview	It's easy to be lazy here because you know you live here, everyone speaks English around here, and we have to speak English at work, so it's very easy not to speak Vietnamese. But it's bad as well. And I -- that's a hard one. I don't know. In a way I would sort of like to almost see it's compulsory. I would almost like to say if you are going to be an expatriate staff -- or comes and earns a salary here, wants to be a part of Vietnam, you should have to do that. But then I know that's very hard and you get a lot of kick back from that I am sure. But -- Speaker 1: And it's a hard language. Speaker 2: It is, yeah. But I guess you just have to say, you know, you don't have to be fluent, you know, at the end of it, but I think you need to keep developing and learning and it probably ties you more to the cross cultural to just say -- yeah, it might take away little bit of that entitlement that the foreigners have of living here sort of, yeah, just to kind of say, 'No, you have to kind of, you have to do more to understand. You know you're in Vietnam, you need to make the effort here to --,' but no, it's always the other way around. It's always, 'No, they need to speak their English. We'll put the Vietnamese staff through English training.'
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\White guilt\When Whiteness isn't useful/desirable	Interview	So, what we did discover, for example, this is one example, we used to have foreign academics presenting about the program in English and then having it translated to Vietnamese, but we realized actually then there is a loss in translations and there is no emotional contact and connection there. And we just said actually I think it's more -- we believe it will be more impactful to

		have a Vietnamese academic present in Vietnamese and not have to deal with the translation.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale	Interview	Speaker 2: I – as expatriates we need to do a little bit more than locals because for marketing purposes it’s better to use expatriates, especially for IVU to promote itself throughout Vietnam.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\Teaching Whiteness	Interview	As a transnational university, are we just an exercise in neo-colonialism?
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\Westernness as proxy for Whiteness	Qualitative Survey of Vietnamese Academics	Question 11. What is a foreign academic? A lot of this survey has been asking you about foreign academics. I’m just wondering who you were imagining when you were answering these questions. What does a typical foreign academic at RMIT Vietnam look like? (You can interpret this in whatever way you feel is appropriate and fits the image in your head. You might consider things like age, gender, nationality/race, hair colour, clothes - or you might interpret it differently. Up to you! Please expand on your answer). Answer: Good teamwork Know how to motivate and inspire (just over 60 years old, Male, Caucasian, Australian)
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\Westernness as professionalism	Interview	Speaker 2: It is also a belief, a sort of belief, I have to say, I have to use that word, is that western things are always better than, yeah, western and westerners especially in Hanoi, in Hanoi where face value is important. Face value is important. So, when people are talking about face value, it’s about image association. Western faces are considered educated, professional. You are bringing in international value, high respect.
ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\White Faces	Interview	Speaker 2: They have got more Vietnamese staff up here than they have got western staff. But --actually not, that’s not true. They have got this Asian staff up here because students don’t really differentiate between Vietnamese, Indian, Korean, to them they are all the same. Speaker 1: Right. Speaker 2: Yeah. And we could be – we could be crude as to say our students want a white face in front of the class. Speaker 1: Yeah.Speaker 2: That’s horribly racist. But they feel that’s what they are paying for.Speaker 1: Yeah.Speaker 2: They do.Speaker 1: Yeah.Speaker 2: And having a white face doesn’t make you a good teacher.

<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\White Faces\Students want whiteness</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>Speaker 2: So, yeah, those and then also – what else would I say? It gives students – so, when we go out to the provinces for example, they don’t – a lot of them don’t have the opportunity to engage with foreigners a lot. So, it does give them the opportunity to, you know, interact with some of our academics. And it also is inspiring for them when they see it in our workshop and, you know, somebody, a lecturer is talking about social media or something like that, it actually puts into perspective that, you know, this is what we can expect at RMIT and that’s – you can’t portray that when it’s just marketing and student recruitment going out and then presenting about it. So, I think that, yeah, it’s – the most value comes out from that. Yeah.</p> <p>Speaker 1: So, is there a particular importance in having foreign academics go then if that’s part of students --?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Sadly, yes. I don’t – like it is, you know, when – it is sad to say, yes, having a white face and being a foreign academic it has a little bit more impact in our events. And that’s really because – that’s really – I think that over time we will see a change in that. It’s this instant expectation that, ‘Okay, if you’re in an international university and if you call yourself a foreign university, you should have foreign academics.’</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a commodity for sale\Whiteness as superior</p>	<p>Fieldnotes</p>	<p>We begin discussing a 2003 study about how much less students read now compared to the 60s. CD questions, “What happened to WASP (white, anglo-saxon, protestant) males doing PhDs? What has happened to all the bright young things? They don’t do PhDs anymore because we are boring them to death with boring textbooks and breadcrumb teaching approaches (ie. Hansel and Gretel being led to the witch’s house) and they can make much more money as bankers than as academics so why would they bother? But I do think it’s sad that we’ve lost all the bright young things, it’s a real shame.”</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a construct\Adopting or being afforded whiteness</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>And I do believe that my English plays a role in how students see me that they would see me as, not as a Vietnamese staff member, but somewhere in between. I am not really white, but I am not really Asian either. And so, I think when they put me on a spectrum, put me in that middle point, in sort of a unique position</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a construct\Delegating/deploying whiteness</p>	<p>Fieldnotes</p>	<p>I remind him of a story he told at lunch yesterday, where one of the COCM managers, who 'is a black African man', asked CD to go to Hanoi to be the "white face" at a particular event, as the academics up there are all Asian and the students wouldn't like it. CD says he found the conversation very awkward bc NM was very upfront about the reasons for asking him to go - his white skin - but in the end he was happy to go bc it meant a free trip to Hanoi. I wonder if NM felt uncomfortable with the conversation, or felt that his black skin was a hindrance because he couldn't just go himself.</p>

<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a construct\Whiteness as difference</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>Speaker 2: So, we can list all their differences of negative and positive. But my observations, one of the biggest ones has come from western, I divide the world between western and eastern. It's not just Vietnam or you know Australian like you, but western and Asians. Western, you guys are most outspoken, you say what you think, and the logic in your mind, the way it works is different. I studied a bit on the culture development of different group of people. Western people they tend to analyze. They observe the surrounding environment by analyzing the event, the fact thing happen, they analyze it, and then they redo the analysis, they generalize, they make a concept of them. Asians, we put more effort to give the general observation without analyzing why, or what is the cost for that. We observe and we try to be a kind of model of that.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a performance\Identity Performances</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>And most importantly, I ask them, you have to choose – I call them ambassadors – you have to choose a lecturer ambassador who is very friendly and approachable because lecturers in our cultures and belief – there are two professions in our cultures who have most prestigious and respective positions is teachers and doctors. Teachers in Chinese-Vietnamese we call them a 'master of teaching human'. Speaker 1: Wow. Speaker 2: And the other is 'master of saving human life'. Speaker 1: That's really beautiful. Speaker 2: Yes, it is beautiful. And it is really connected with our causes, that's why when we are talking about being lecturers or teachers, 'Oh, one word, you know, it means – it conveys thousand values in it.' Speaker 1: Yeah. Speaker 2: And you have strong, strong proud – strong pride when you say I have traditional – my family has education tradition.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a performance\Identity Performances\be white on command</p>	<p>Fieldnotes</p>	<p>After the students have exited, the parents and myself are allowed to make our way downstairs. I go outside to find MB, who was in the CoCM phalanx. She looks so regal in her robe and cap! I take some photos of her and a few of the other robed academics, but we keep getting interrupted by students wanting to get their photos taken with her. I comment that it's nice that they want photos with their lecturers, and she laughs. "Well, it is, but that's not what that was! I've never met that girl in my life! Pretty sure she just wants photos with the blonde lady in the floppy hat and Harry Potter gown. I feel like I'm in costume as the White, Western Professor!"</p>

<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as a performance\Whiteness as substanceless/empty</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>Speaker 2: Yup. And the reason why, because it comes from the choice factor I just mentioned, although the fact that you – when parents come there and feel very comfortable talking with a Vietnamese consultant and most of the time they do, most of the time they do. But as a face value and image association, and talking about brand image association, you have to make sure that a bit of image up here, that you have a physical touchpoint for the market, because it's all about association. When I am thinking about IVU, I am thinking about international – international lecturers. I am thinking about international quality professionals and stuff like that.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC WHITENESS\Whiteness as invisible / made visible</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>Speaker 2: I have to say it's more an expat thing, but I am sure there are some cultures that are a little bit more used to being the outsider</p>