Impenetrable Citizenship: Teachers’ Perceptions of Non-Citizen Students in the United Arab Emirates

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Introduction

The Arab States of the Persian Gulf are home to the highest proportion of migrant workers in the world, the majority of which has temporary residency and no access to citizenship. In 2010, Emirati citizens made up only about 12% of the population living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE; National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This chapter examines the educational opportunities and experiences of non-citizen children living in the UAE who pay to access public schools. This is a small and relatively privileged group of non-citizen, Arabic-speaking students, who have been admitted to public schools. We begin with background information regarding gender, education, and citizenship issues in the UAE. Gender and citizenship form the core of our conceptual framework and serve as the lens through which the data is analyzed. Following an overview of the study we highlight three key findings in relation to masculinities. The data shows that teachers perceive non-Emirati boys to be more interested in school and more likely to complete secondary schooling than their Emirati peers. In contrast, teachers did not find citizenship to be a significant indicator of educational success for girls. Lastly, teachers believe that the spurious relationship between education credentials and labor market opportunities for Emirati boys creates the differences between students. Emirati boys are privileged in the labor

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market and do not require education credentials to access jobs. This chapter demonstrates the importance of examining the intersection of gender and citizenship status in education.

Background

The UAE is a small country (about the size of the state of Maine in the U.S.) in the Persian Gulf with a population of almost 5 million (Ministry of Economy, 2008). In this federation of seven states, or emirates, only 12% of the inhabitants are citizens of the UAE, and the workforce is more than 90% expatriate. A large number of Arabs from other countries reside in the UAE, and many Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Filipinos live there as well (U.S. Department of State, 2007). In addition, there are as many as 100,000 stateless people living in the UAE (Ghazal, 2008) who hold no documents tying them to a nation state. When boundaries were established in the Gulf region, the UAE used tribal affiliation to determine citizenship. This process left many individuals without citizenship (U.S. Department of State, 2011). The gender balance of the population is skewed, with more than twice as many males as females in the country, thanks largely to the high rates of male labor migration to the UAE (Ministry of Economy & UNDP, 2007). As the graph below shows, non-citizens outnumber Emiratis across the life course. The gap is most dramatic among 25- to 40-year-olds.

Population by Age and Citizenship Status
Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), the location of this study, is the northernmost Emirate and is socio-economically in the middle range of the Emirates (Ridge, 2009). There are approximately 231,000 inhabitants in RAK (Ministry of Economy, 2008). The proportion of citizens is higher in RAK than in the country as a whole, but less than half the residents of RAK are citizens of the UAE (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The following sections provide a short overview of gender and migration issues, the education system, and citizenship in the UAE.

**Gender and Migration in the UAE**

There is significant gender inequality in the UAE, earning the country a rank of 105th out of 130 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2009). The OECD’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) notes gender inequality in several areas. Early marriage, polygamy, discrimination in regard to parental authority, and domestic violence
are all cited as problems in the UAE (OECD, 2009). Women are overrepresented in secondary and tertiary education, leading to a reverse gender gap in educational attainment, but women are significantly underrepresented and underpaid in the workforce. Thirty-nine percent of women residing in the UAE work; 92% of men do. Female Emirati citizens make up only 2% of the workforce. The average woman earns around $7,600 a year whereas the average man earns $32,000 (Assaad, 2008). The unemployment rate for women is about three times that of men (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2009). The reasons for the gender gap in labor participation are not fully understood.

When considering immigration in the UAE, a total of 3.2 million migrants resided in the nation in 2005. Of this total, less than 30% of the migrants are women. In RAK, like the rest of the UAE, about 70% of the non-citizens are male (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The largest number of non-citizen males and females are between the ages of 25–39. School-aged (5–19) non-citizen boys also outnumber girls, but to a much lower degree than adults in the nation (Ministry of Economy, 2005). Most of the female migrants in the UAE come to work in the fields of health care and domestic services (UN Division of Population, 2006). Male immigrants come to the nation for employment opportunities, most often in the field of construction (Shah, 2006). The majority of these workers hold renewable temporary visas. Opportunities for migrant employment are gendered and largely segregated. If immigrants have children while in the UAE, the children do not qualify for Emirati citizenship unless the child’s father is an Emirati citizen. These children usually inherit the status of their parents.

**Education in the UAE**

In the UAE boys and girls are educated separately in government schools at all levels. Some private schools offer co-education. According to attainment, graduation rates, literacy rates,
repetition rates, and examination pass rates, boys are behind girls academically. Almost 6% of boys repeat a grade, whereas less than 3% of girls repeat a grade (UNESCO, 2002). Girls in the UAE stay in school an average of one more year than boys. Girls also outperform their male peers in Emirati schools. The percentage of girls to receive a top grade (90 to 100%) on the school certificate exam was triple the number of boys to receive the top grade in 2005 (UAE Ministry of Education, 2007). In RAK during the 2007–2008 school year, more than 11% of boys dropped out of school. About 1% of girls in RAK dropped out that same year (Russell, 2012). There appears to be a significant difference in the quality of education provided at schools for boys and schools for girls. In her research in eight public secondary schools in RAK, Ridge (2009) found that the quality of teaching in girls’ schools in the UAE was higher than in boys’ schools.

Within this context exist two parallel education systems, the public and the private. In the 2009–2010 school year, more than 500,000 students attended private schools, whereas half that number enrolled in public institutions. Emirati citizens have access to free public education from primary through tertiary education. The private education system emerged to educate the non-citizen population (Ministry of Economy & UNDP, 2007). Overall, more students attend private schools than attend public ones. Most Emirati students in RAK attend public schools. There are elite private schools that cater to privileged Emirati families and wealthy non-Emiratis. Other private schools are less expensive and cater to non-Emiratis. Some of these schools offer quality education, trained teachers, and appropriate facilities. Other private schools are poorly run and do not offer quality education to students. The range of quality and price is significant. The federal government does not provide any funds for private schools. In the UAE, about 18% of the private school students are Emirati citizens. More than 40% are from non-Arab Asian
countries, and almost 30% are from other Arab nations. The remaining students are from Europe, the U.S., and Africa, and approximately 2% of the private school students have no documentation (UAE Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The public schools, the focus of this study, are designed to accommodate the needs of Emirati citizens and are not intended to educate non-citizens. However, a few non-citizen students are allowed to attend. Only Arabic speakers are considered for admission to public schools, making this group quite small and privileged among non-citizens. Similarly, only immigrant students who speak Chinese are considered for admission into top ranked schools in Hong Kong, leaving many South Asian immigrants to seek out schools in the “lower band” (Chee, this volume). Thereby, language is an automatic system of ranking students. For non-citizens in the UAE, admission to public schools is based on merit, and not all students who wish to attend public school are admitted. In Table 11.1 below, student enrollment in public schools by country of origin is displayed. These figures are from government data and do not indicate where a student was born but where their family is from.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>% of total in public school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other GCC(^{ii})</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with no ID card</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Arab Countries</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Students who do not speak Arabic attend private schools that offer instruction in a variety of languages. For example, private schools in RAK cater to the needs of Urdu, Arabic, French, English, Punjabi, and Tamil speakers. It is difficult for non-citizen students to access public schools. In RAK, the education zone has asserted that no more than 20% of a school’s student body can consist of non-citizens. If a school feels it does not have sufficient resources to meet the needs of non-citizen students, principals may choose to deny entry (Zacharias, 2011). It appears that, in RAK, admission is at the discretion of school principals. Non-citizen students pay a fee of 6,000 AED (approximately 1,600 USD) per year to attend public school (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 2011). Although high, this tuition is lower than the average private school tuition.

It is important to note that public schools for girls in the UAE are staffed primarily by Emirati women. Eighty percent of teachers in girls’ schools are Emirati. At the same time, few Emirati men are teaching. Seventy percent of male teachers are non-citizens from other Arab countries (Ridge, 2009).

**Citizenship: Rights and Privileges of the Few**
Within the UAE, only one factor matters when citizenship is at stake: the father’s lineage. This strict view of national belonging aligns with the way in which certain sects pass the Islamic religion on to children. This practice leaves many individuals born to non-Emirati parents and even Emirati mothers without citizenship privileges. Only very recently has there been an attempt to grant citizenship for children born to Emirati mothers, and this is still a developing and dubious path to citizenship (Quasammi, 2010).

Emirati citizens enjoy many privileges, including free education through tertiary level, free healthcare, and land. Emirati citizens are privileged in the labor market as well: Emiratization programs have been implemented to increase the percentage of Emiratis in the labor force by setting quotas for the hiring of citizens in the public and private sectors. These quotas do not have a gendered component. For example, 25% of new employees in the banking sector must be Emirati citizens. These citizens are also protected against lay-offs (Raven, 2011). Additionally, Emiratis make more money than their non-citizen counterparts. In the realm of education, UAE law sets different salary schedules for teachers according to citizenship status.

Despite these unequal conditions, migration to the region from nations such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India remains steady and high (UN Populations Division, 2006). The nation’s foreign-born population makes up 98% of private sector jobs (Shah, 2006). With the draw of available employment, the population has shown greater growth from immigration than natural birth rates (UN Population Division, 2006). Non-Emirati individuals born in the UAE may attain working papers, which allow them to be in the country with documentation. However, due to intense competition, many receive such papers via the underground “visa trading” business (Shah, 2006). Children are included on a parent’s working papers. A boy may remain on his
parent’s papers until age 18. A girl may remain in the country on her parent’s work papers until she marries.

**Conceptual Framework**

In exploring the relationship between gender, citizenship, and public education in the UAE, we are guided by literature within gender studies that focuses on masculinities as well as by conceptualizations of citizenship. We consider these areas as intersecting phenomena that expand or limit freedoms that impact students’ experiences in schools and beyond.

**Gender and Education**

Gender disparity in education is not a new issue. Historically, girls have been educationally disadvantaged in relation to boys in most parts of the world, and a great deal of attention has focused on closing the gender gap. Recently, this gap has shifted to favor girls, particularly in countries where boys and girls have equal access to education (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Studies cannot pinpoint the exact reasons why boys in certain parts of the world are underperforming and/or not enrolling in school, but we do know that they experience schooling differently on educational and societal levels (Jeffrey, Jeffrey, & Jeffery 2008). Boys may view schooling along a continuum of relevant to meaningless when it comes to economic opportunities and freedoms. For example, Willis (1977) described how working class boys characterized mental labor and pro-school behavior as feminine; their rejection of schooling helped to reproduce class structures. The degree to which one benefits from educational opportunities often depends upon the existence of other conditions, including highly gendered structures of opportunity within school and economic sectors.

The connection between education and economics is one that is closely linked to hegemonic masculinity, the way of being male that is culturally dominant in a particular context (Jeffrey et
al., 2008). Classist hierarchies, discriminatory practices, and the absence of social capital may interrupt the link between education and employment, even for men who attain school-based credentials (Reed, 1998).

**Citizenship**

Citizenship demarcates the space where human rights and national rights intersect (Kleyn, 2011). Although all individuals should have access to human rights, only citizens are promised civil rights. These may include voting, access to education, healthcare, employment, and other social services. The boundaries of citizenship have been tied to seemingly neutral institutional and constitutional stipulations, downplaying social and human differences that inequitably position individuals to receive or be denied rights (Alubo, 2004).

Across societies, non-citizens are often blamed for social problems, ranging from crime to terrorism to the state of the economy. However, migrants are also in high demand for their ability to provide cheap labor. Non-citizen migrants are portrayed through the duality of being “threats to the peace and security of nation-states … [and] heroic agents of development” (Glick Schiller & Faist, 2009, p. 4).

Political notions of citizenship seem incapable of capturing the heterogeneity created by global flows of people. Cultural citizenship is “a process of self-making and being made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes” (Ong, 1996, p. 737). People identify with and are ascribed statuses in relation to multiple places. However, aspects of difference help to create hierarchies that shape whose ways of being and acting are accepted or rejected. Further, the nation-state and civil society work, in concert and independently, to shape people and society through “surveillance, discipline, control and administration” (Ong, 1996, p. 737).
Privileged groups enjoy what Ong (1999) and others have called flexible citizenship, a “new, more flexible, negotiated cosmopolitan and popular forms of citizenship, with the emphasis on inclusion, conviviality and the celebration of difference” (Nyamnjoh, 2007, p. 74). Flexible citizens enjoy a sense of belonging across national spaces and move freely across borders that have negative consequences for others (Ong, 1999). Social differences such as race, socio-economic status, gender, and geography matter when it comes to belonging. Those without access to power remain oppressed by a system that positions and perpetuates them as “peripheral migrants” (Martínez, 1995, p. 25). Within the UAE citizenship is extremely inflexible and even impenetrable for non-Emirate inhabitants.

**The Intersection of Gender and Citizenship**

In the UAE, as elsewhere, gender and citizenship intersect to affect life chances and freedoms. National policies, societal norms, and views of differences across gender and citizenship play out in educational outcomes in nuanced ways. In the case of gender, we aim to avoid essentialist notions that homogenize boys and men and ignore differences within gender groups. In regards to citizenship, we not only consider governmental operationalization of it, but how individuals are made and choose to make themselves based on their surroundings (Ong, 1996). Thus, both concepts become more difficult to pinpoint, but more accurate.

**Methods**

The results presented here are part of a larger study of gender and meanings ascribed to schooling in RAK. The study was designed to shed light on the gender gap favoring girls with an emphasis on how individuals understand the meaning of school for boys and girls. Findings about citizenship surfaced during emergent coding of interview data. Survey data was then revisited with a focus on understanding the perspectives of the non-citizen students. This chapter
draws on the qualitative data, specifically interviews with teachers and administrators, and open-ended responses from 9th grade students on questionnaire items.

The study took place in four preparatory schools in RAK during the first half of 2010. Preparatory schools are similar to middle schools in the U.S. These schools provide the final stage of compulsory education in the UAE, and students are generally between 12 and 15 years old. Following preparatory school, students may choose to continue their studies or to leave the formal education system. Because public schooling at the preparatory level is single sex, the study includes two schools for girls and two for boys. Teachers are the same gender as their students.

Data for this chapter come primarily from structured interviews with 42 individuals conducted by Russell. Five school level administrators and one emirate level administrator participated. Thirty-six preparatory teachers were interviewed. All of the male teachers in this study are non-citizens and only teach boys. One hundred and seventeen student survey responses are also considered. In the focal schools, about ten percent of students are non-citizens. The non-citizen students in this study identify as Omani, Palestinian, Egyptian, and Syrian; they either have a parent working for the government (teacher, police, immigration office) or have an Emirati mother. They are not necessarily wealthy non-citizens, but they appear to have connections through parental employment or mother’s citizenship. School is conducted in Emirati Arabic, and speakers of other Arabics must adjust in school. It is not clear if these students were born abroad or in the UAE; however, they do not qualify for Emirati citizenship.

Gender and Citizenship as Indicators of Success

Teachers interviewed for this study were asked to discuss which of their students tend to perform well and which students tend to perform poorly in school. Citizenship emerged as a theme,
particularly in relation to male students. Three key findings related to gender and citizenship surfaced. First, male teachers perceive Emirati boys to be less interested in school and less likely to complete secondary schooling than their non-citizen peers. Second, female teachers did not find citizenship to be a significant indicator of educational success for girls. Third, teachers believe that the weak relationship between education credentials and labor market opportunities for Emirati boys creates the differences between students.

It is expected that the most privileged in a society will perform best in school. Schools frequently reproduce social inequalities based on gender, socioeconomic status, race, and other factors (Bowles & Gintis, 2007). In developing countries, children from wealthier households are more likely to be enrolled in school (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Within the UAE one would expect Emirati boys, who hold a position of privilege in the nation, to outperform their non-citizen peers as well as their female counterparts. However, this is not the case. As discussed earlier, girls are outperforming boys in Emirati schools. Additionally, the teachers in this study described non-citizen boys as better students than Emirati boys. The idea that non-citizen boys outperform Emirati boys is supported by drop-out rates and exam results from the Ministry of Education (Russell, 2012). When comparing non-citizen and Emirati boys, some male teachers specifically described their problem students as Emirati boys. One teacher stated: “I see differences in motivation [between Emirati and non-Emirati boys] … [Emirati boys] come in late, keep their heads down through class, maybe sleeping through first period” (Male teacher, non-Emirati, interview, January 25, 2010). This teacher and others described Emirati boys as uninterested in school and unmotivated. By contrast, Teacher D (male, non-citizen) said his non-citizen students “stand out, in a good way, with how they are in class, their attitude, behavior” (male teacher, non-Emirati, interview, January 25, 2010). The teachers also believed that non-citizen students
will complete secondary school but did not expect the same from all of their Emirati students. Male teachers said that less than three quarters of their male Emirati students would finish secondary school and that all male non-citizen students would finish. Ministry of Education data does indicate that Emirati boys are less likely to graduate than non-citizen boys. However, there is currently no data to determine the cohort drop-out rates for students in the UAE (Russell, 2012).

Notably, according to student questionnaires, the Emirati and non-citizen boys disagreed with the teachers. The students had similar expectations about completing secondary education, with 83% of Emirati boys and 85% of non-citizen boys (a statistically insignificant difference) intending to graduate. The non-citizen boys were more likely than the Emirati boys to consider themselves to be good students. They also reported working harder in school than their Emirati peers did.

In contrast, when teachers from girls’ schools talked about the relative academic success of groups of students, citizenship was not a significant factor. This perception is echoed in Ministry of Education data, which shows no significant difference between Emirati and non-citizen girls’ tendency to drop out of school (Russell, 2012). Teachers indicated that more difference exists between girls from rural areas and girls from urban areas than between national groups. The teachers in this study perceive that, in relation to education, citizenship is not pertinent for girls. This was reflected in student responses too. Emirati and non-citizen girls’ questionnaire answers were not markedly different. This finding highlights the importance of considering multiple dimensions of difference in education research. By considering both citizenship and gender, a more complex and complete picture of the state of education emerges.

What explains these findings? The teachers at the schools for boys are mostly non-citizens. All of the male teachers who participated in this study were non-citizens. In the UAE, about 70% of
male teachers are expatriate teachers from neighboring Arab states. In contrast, around 80% of all female teachers are Emirati citizens (Ridge, 2009). Currently, there are no Emirati males enrolled in the federal teacher training programs in the UAE (personal communication, Dr. Ken Volk, Professor, Masdar Institute of Science & Technology, March 1, 2012). It seems reasonable that the non-citizen teachers identify more closely with the non-citizen students and therefore perceive them to be better students. Although this may be true, the belief that non-citizen boys are performing well in school is supported by Ministry of Education data. Non-citizen boys attending public schools are more likely to complete secondary school than their Emirati peers. The relationship between citizenship status and dropping out in the 2007–2008 school year was statistically significant for boys. Being a non-citizen male was related to staying in school. Although, the relationship between citizenship and dropping out did not hold for girls (Russell, 2012). There is no statistically significant difference between non-citizen and Emirati girls in terms of graduation rates (Russell, 2012). It is also possible that the families who choose to send their boys to public schools rather than private ones are in some way unique. The choice to pursue a different type of education may be a pro-academic choice and indicative of an academically oriented attitude (see Riordan, 2007, for a discussion of pro-academic choices related to choosing single-sex education). Principals may only be admitting well-behaved, motivated non-citizens as well. These non-citizen students are privileged in comparison to many non-citizens residing in RAK. If we envision citizenship status on a continuum from “peripheral migrants” (Martinez, 1995) to “flexible citizens” (Ong, 1999), the non-citizen students in public schools appear to be closer to “flexible citizens” side of the scale. In the hierarchy of non-citizens in the UAE, wealthy Arabs or Europeans attending a high quality private school have
more privilege than this group. However, in comparison to the majority of non-citizens, the Arabic speaking, public school students in this study have access to more rights and privileges. Why is citizenship an important factor in education for boys and not for girls? Teachers in this study repeatedly referred to the spurious connection between academic credentials and labor market opportunities for Emirati boys. As one teacher stated, “Dropping out is the short cut to the same financial gain, if he is a national [Emirati citizen]” (Male teacher, non-Emirati, interview, April 26, 2010). The teacher went on to explain that male students leave school early to pursue lucrative job opportunities with the army or other government positions. More education does not lead to better prospects for Emirati boys, who already enjoy access to government positions that do not require education credentials. Schooling offers Emirati boys a wider variety of occupational options, such as being a teacher. However, those jobs may not be as desirable. Teaching, for example, requires an additional seven years of schooling, and it pays less and has less social status than joining the army at the conclusion of ninth grade. These employment opportunities are not available to non-citizens, who therefore may need higher levels of education to secure work or to enter higher education. In contrast, Emirati girls have access to most of these jobs, but positions in the army or police are not widely accepted as appropriate for women, and so few women take such jobs. One highly educated Emirati teacher shared that she was teaching because her family wanted her to work in a single-sex environment. She would have preferred to work in business, but that would require close interactions with non-familial men. She and her family were not comfortable with this. Women are not explicitly barred from taking advantage of their citizenship status, but gendered cultural norms make it difficult for women to capitalize on the privileges of citizenship in the labor market. At the same
time, Emirati male privilege in the workforce has decreased the incentives for Emirati boys to stay in school.

This data illustrates the skewed distribution of power and wealth in the UAE, with citizenship and gender being key factors to accessing these advantages. It appears that Emirati boys do not need education to obtain economic and social rewards. Their gender and citizenship status are all they need. To experience the freedoms afforded to Emirati boys, girls and non-citizen boys may be utilizing education as a pathway to opportunities in the nation. With additional education, girls can enter professions, such as teaching in a single sex school, that are in line with cultural norms. Schooling allows non-citizen boys and non-citizen girls to prepare for the labor market. In this way they position themselves as citizens with some flexibility who aim to be a part of the society through the education system, with aspirations of employment and further inclusion.

The comparable realities of non-citizen boys and all girls led some teachers to discuss the link between education and the labor market. One remarked: “It's the silver spoon syndrome. They [Emirati boys] have a position with the family company or something like the army. Their sisters don’t have that waiting for them …. The others [non-citizens] don’t have that silver spoon” (Female teacher, Emirati, interview, April 27, 2010).

Like Emirati women, non-citizen men and non-citizen women are disadvantaged in the labor market. They are not eligible for some jobs and are likely to be paid less than their Emirati counterparts. However, a non-citizen boy’s employment status is more consequential, in some ways, than a girl’s employment status. According to visa regulations, a non-citizen girl can continue to live in the UAE on her father’s visa until she marries. In comparison, a boy can only remain on the same visa until he turns 18. A non-citizen boy must either be enrolled in a university, which requires completing preparatory and secondary schooling, or obtain his own
employment visa to retain his resident status (Abu Dhabi Government, 2011). This adds pressure for non-citizen males to remain in school and to perform well, as the consequence of neglecting education could be removal from the country. The gendered nature of visa regulations creates institutional-level processes that encourage non-citizen boys to stay in school. For these boys, education is a means to secure opportunities and freedoms.

As Cammarota (2008) indicates, the gains reaped from education depend on a variety of factors. In this case, gender and citizenship impact the benefits of schooling but not as might be expected. In part because non-citizen boys are adversely impacted by policies, they are more serious about and committed to schooling than their Emirati counterparts. The privilege experienced by Emirati boys decreases perceived benefits of education. The barriers non-citizens and Emirati girls face may actually enhance benefits of education for them. This paradox of privilege yields a population of Emirati boys who seem not to see education as providing freedoms and a group of non-citizen boys who do. Gender and citizenship can either be barriers or pathways to freedoms. For Emirati boys, gender and citizenship pave the way for their economic, social and geographic freedoms. For non-citizen boys and girls, citizenship is an obstacle to freedoms, whereas for Emirati girls, gender is the most salient barrier. Non-citizen boys, Emirati girls, and non-citizen girls—who experience double barriers of citizenships and gender—are trying to overcome these impediments through education.

**Conclusion**

These findings are interesting in light of general ideas about Arab men and boys. The picture of non-citizen, Arab boys living in the UAE as marginalized individuals with limited freedoms due to their gender and citizenship contradicts the typical representation of Arab males. Arab men and boys are often portrayed as oppressors of women or as threats to security. As Reeser (2010)
indicates, masculinity is usually understood to be associated with freedom. This is particularly true of Arab masculinities that are frequently linked with dominance. This assumption is challenged by these findings. Non-citizen boys are victims of institutional processes that deny them full access to the labor market as well as the opportunity to truly belong in the nation where they are growing up because of their citizenship status. Through individual decisions about education, non-citizen boys are creating an Arab masculinity associated with high levels of education. Conversely, as more and more Emirati boys leave school early for the labor market, they are generating an Emirati masculinity tied to a rejection of school. Subsequently, nuanced forms of masculinity are being forged in ways that are closely connected to citizenship policies of exclusion.

We have discussed the current situation in the UAE and RAK for non-citizen students accessing public schooling. Through this study we see that teachers in these four preparatory schools believe citizenship status is significant in relation to educational achievement for boys. Teachers also believe that the institutionalized privileging of Emirati boys in the labor market, via cultural restraints on girls and restricted opportunities for non-citizen boys, is the root of differences between academic attitudes and performance. The data presented here shows that despite attending the same schools and classes, the educational experiences of some non-citizen boys and Emirati boys differ, and these differences are largely based on national policies that preclude access to citizenship. Within the notion of “flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1999), these boys experience some level of privilege, specifically in the realm of economic status and education, but are otherwise limited by impenetrable national policies of citizenship. Social and cultural institutions are mediating personal freedoms and impacting choices about education. These non-
citizen boys in public schools appear to be using education, an arena where they have a degree of personal control and choice, as a means to freedom.

Our findings offer evidence of the importance of research considering the intersectionality of citizenship status and gender. This move may particularly important in contexts similar to the UAE where citizenship is rigidly defined and impermeable. In the UAE further exploration of this relationship is needed. Here we have uncovered the experience of one group, leaving out Arabic students of lower socioeconomic status as well as non-Arab students and students in private schools. Understanding how both gender and citizenship status impact school experiences can inform education, immigration, and labor policies to improve the lives of Emiratis and non-citizens, men, and women.
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i Government statistics do not differentiate between individuals who move to the UAE from another country and non-citizens who are born in the UAE.

ii The GCC countries are: the Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. GCC citizens can usually travel freely between member states without the need for visas.