‘Living the dream’ - Indian postgraduate students and International Student Identity

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ABSTRACT

A decline in the number of international students studying in the UK is an issue currently facing UK universities. Competition has steadily increased amongst higher education providers with a greater number of students choosing to study in Australia and the United States. Within this context it is increasingly important for practitioners within the sector to focus more closely on the international student experience.

Focus of my research

This research project contributes to the existing literature on the international student experience and moreover international student identity. Higher Education is seen as a site of identity construction for the individual. This research project provides an opportunity to explore the international student experiences of Indian postgraduate students within a new academic culture, their development of support networks, and their search for local employment whilst studying abroad.

Identity is understood to be socially constructed; that is, as one's sense of self and beliefs about one's own social group as well as others are constructed through interactions in the broader social context such as education and work. This research project has been influenced by more recent developments within psychology and other disciplines which resist the notion of identity as a developmental and linear process. By adopting a social constructionist lens, identity formation is not necessarily considered as a linear phenomenon, emphasising instead the fluid and dynamic nature of identity amongst international students.

Identity construction can be located at the individual, relational, organisational levels and moreover the wider society. Essentially identity is seen as constructed and enacted in everyday talk by the student, in their social interactions between themselves and others.

Methodology

The research followed seven Indian international students who have undertaken taught postgraduate study abroad for the first time in a UK university and invites them

to share their on-going ‘identity-work’ over a 12 month period. The ‘snowball sampling’ criteria included gender; nationality, age, full-time Masters’ students from the same student cohort, with a variation in previous educational background and work experience.

Students gave their own individual accounts of their ‘identity-work’ abroad through semi-structured interviews. Within the interviews ‘talk’ is not just approached as an outward manifestation of identity but a site in which identities are constructed and taken up and performed. Identity positions can often be located within ‘interview talk’, and seen as a temporarily occupied coherent identity. This is not to say that identities are ‘just talk’ but that talk is understood as a continuum of meaningful life practices.

The methodology employed facilitates the generation of a model of international student identity where identity is seen to emerge in everyday practices. The model encompasses four dimensions: Individual, Relational, Organisational and Societal.

Key findings

The study found that study abroad is a site for identity construction. The individual accounts of their lived experience as international students revealed that identity is seen to be temporary and change over time, and Identity emerged in everyday practices both on and off-campus.

Identity is drawn from four dimensions, individual, relational, organisational and societal. Societal is significant to the findings and illustrates where identity emerges off-campus during study abroad. The four dimensions of identity change over time and in importance depending on what is going on for the individual. Despite experiencing challenges the participants demonstrated resilience, independence and resourcefulness.

Implications/significance of the research

The identity work of international students is acknowledged here as a complex and on-going process. These findings offer a rich understanding of the internationalisation of higher education from an individual perspective. Although some of the problems

that students experience are referred to by other researchers, few actually conceptualise them in terms of identity. By conceptualising the international student experience in terms of ‘identity work’ we are able to gain further understanding to ways in which individuals and their environments interact in the social construction of identity formation. This research helps universities, support services and individuals to learn much more about the international student experience so as to more effectively develop the provisions they offer.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The international student experience presents a challenge to host institutions as well as to professional teaching staff. “In particular, the great diversity of the international student population requires HE providers to manage an increasingly varied range of expectations and needs” (QAA Report 2012). This topic has therefore attracted the attention of both practitioners and researchers. This research study is important as it extends the existing literature by re-framing the international student experience by adopting a discursive approach to international students’ ‘identity work’. The nature of identity work is discursive, and identity can therefore be seen as temporary and dynamic within social settings. This research is underpinned with a constructivist philosophy that asserts that reality is socially constructed by groups and individuals, and that this approach allows for multiple meanings of social situations. This research has been inspired by my own professional experience and observations.

Motivation for the study

In my early teaching career, business students comprised largely of a mono-cultural group. The diversity of today’s business student cohort is remarkably different from that of ten years ago. This significant change includes an increase in the number of full-time business Masters’ students from non-European countries being recruited directly onto postgraduate taught courses. The Business School in which I am employed has previously had partnership agreements with several European institutions; students would usually enrol for a top-up of their undergraduate business degree and then progress to business Masters’ level. These particular students would typically have had 12 months’ educational experience within the university, and would have lived in local student accommodation prior to enrolment on postgraduate courses. More recently, however, international student recruitment within the university began to focus outside of Europe, with the consequent development of partnership agreements in China. Meanwhile, other international student recruitment

has been successfully conducted via specialist agents in the Middle East, Africa and India.

Despite this increase in diversity, the provision of staff development for staff such as myself can be described as reactive, and delivered on a 'need to know' basis. My own professional teaching qualifications (the ESRC Management Teaching Fellowship scheme) did not prepare me for the change I experienced in terms of the increased diversity of the student cohort. I was unable to draw on any knowledge of a second language, so I found myself sharing my experiences and sourcing anecdotal evidence from the language staff employed within the Business School. In my professional practice, I was faced with a range of issues, such as the existence of a significant number of students who had met the requisite IELTS test scores, yet were nevertheless struggling in the certificate and diploma stages of the business Masters' programme. I did not really know what these students were experiencing or why there was a lack of social integration on their part with other students in the classroom during seminar group activities. My previous teaching experience of domestic and European students did not assist me in addressing the pedagogical issues presented by the increasing diversity of the cohorts. Institutionally, appropriate staff development was unavailable. It became increasingly apparent to me, faced with these issues, that internationalisation is a complex phenomenon in terms of staff development and curriculum design. Gu and Schweisfurth (2011) concur with this observation when they state that it is challenging for institutions to offer pedagogically responsive and culturally appropriate curricula to a diverse cohort of students.

Academic support services for international students at my university comprised of a series of workshops delivered to international students, known as 'English for Academic Purposes'. Specialist English Language staff would deliver these workshops to all international students on a weekly basis, yet with minimal involvement from teaching staff in the relevant various academic disciplines. I felt no closer to understanding the international student experience apart from what I had personally observed during my own classes.

Nevertheless, I became increasingly fascinated by the anecdotal evidence I was accumulating from my chats with teaching colleagues. The English Language tutors

were only too willing to share their experiences of teaching international students and their learning styles. I ascertained that, within their pedagogic practices, these tutors explored cultural differences and subsequent culture shock with their students; furthermore, they were familiar with the diversity that prevails amongst international students in terms of their previous educational experiences. These tutors appeared to have a much better understanding of the international student experience than other teaching staff. These issues both fascinated me and inspired me to discover more about the international student experience, both inside and outside the classroom. Given that I had no specified pastoral support role for the business Masters' students I was teaching, I was unable to directly gain in-depth insights into the issues that these students were facing.

I therefore decided to become a member of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) subject interest group on internationalisation, and I made various enquiries into how I could formalise my professional practice in terms of a research proposal. The individual and organisational aspects of internationalisation seemed key to understanding the challenges that I was facing.

Focus of the Study

The need for a better understanding of the micro-level aspects of the internationalisation of higher education have been highlighted by Sanderson (2008), who has called for more in-depth research at both the individual and institutional levels. Doherty and Singh (2005) advocate focusing on the individual level of internationalisation by re-framing the international student as an 'ethnographer'. In this approach, the individual international student would gather their own data based on their own experiences, as opposed to a survey-based approach which is subsequently interpreted by a researcher. The conceptualisation of internationalisation at the individual level is thus particularly appropriate for further extending our understanding of the nature of internationalisation and its complexities.

The individual level is further extended in this current research project by a focus on the micro-level aspects of the international student experience, and moreover on

international student identity. On reviewing the literature on internationalisation, Caruana and Spurling (2007) concluded that there existed an over-reliance on the positivist framing of the international student experience through large-scale surveys and questionnaires. Less common was a more discursive approach towards the international student experience, an approach which could extend practitioners' and researchers' understanding of this phenomenon.

In this research, a discursive approach is undertaken in the framing of the international student experience through 'identity-work'. The research design challenges a homogeneous account of the international student experience; in addition, it emphasises the diversity within the international student experience by focusing on the temporary identity positions held by students. Once selected, the participants shared their experiences of their study abroad through semi-structured interviews at various significant points during their year abroad.

This focus on the 'identity work' of Indian international students offers the potential for further understanding and extending our knowledge of the international student experience within my own professional practice. It develops professional practice by discouraging the convenient, over-simplified stereotype of the 'international student', opening this notion up for theoretical debate and acknowledging the complexities and subtleties of 'identity-work' within the internationalisation of higher education at the individual level. This research seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of the international student experience and its intrinsically discursive nature.

This research project affirms that study abroad is a site for identity construction and that 'identity-work' does indeed take place. Block (2010) suggests that 'identity-work' occurs within the international student experience. "The discursive process is defined as the ongoing engagement with others as individuals participate in their day-to-day activities" (Block 2010:18). Individuals may situate themselves through their discursive practices, and at the same time they are situated by others (Davies and Harre 1991). Identity-work occurs in the company of others either face-to-face or otherwise. Various authors such as Carroll and Ryan (2005) acknowledge that identity can be constructed within a teaching and learning context. For many international students, however, the

teaching and learning context is only one of the many opportunities for identity-work to take place.

The 'identity-work' framework which is proposed in this research project has been adapted from the work of Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) and Jenkins (2008). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) state that the process of identity construction known as 'identity-work' can occur in social situations within the workplace. These situations are categorisable at the individual, relational and organisational levels. Jenkins (2008) offers a broader notion of identity beyond the organisation by referring to identity as being constructed by the individual and others through a wider range of social interactions. Such a framework allows for a more holistic view of international student identity, moving beyond the notion that individuals simply need to 'assimilate or integrate' in new cultural situations. It extends the conceptualisation of international student identity beyond the levels of the classroom and institution. The framework's discursive nature, drawn from the first-hand accounts of students, additionally allows for the recognition of a more temporary identity position, one which is neither single nor fixed, yet ongoing. Taylor (2005) describes such a position as a 'temporarily occupied, coherent identity with its own vantage point or perspective' (Taylor 2005, p253), where identity work is ongoing and open-ended. This therefore allows for individual experiences of internationalisation to be re-conceptualised through the identity work of these students, and it allows for a diversity of experience within a cultural group.

Background to the Study: Research & Policy Context

My own professional interest in the internationalisation of higher education encouraged me to look beyond the recruitment efforts of my own institution in attracting international students to study in the UK.

In 2011/12, the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) reported that, in the East Midlands region alone, 25,940 international students were enrolled in higher education establishments, with China and India listed as the top two countries of origin. In the same year in the UK overall, international students totalled 435,230, with 25%

of these being enrolled on full-time postgraduate taught courses. This has meant that some universities have each recruited an average of over 6,000 international students. However, some subject disciplines appear more attractive than others, with Business & Administrative studies attracting the largest number of international students into one subject discipline (HESA) 2014.

The recent migration control restrictions imposed by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) have caused some concern amongst UK universities. These restrictions are likely to impact on the final destination of international students, and may even influence their decision whether or not to study in the UK. In terms of the financial sustainability of universities, a reduction in international recruitment may have a detrimental impact, and may have a negative impact on the employment opportunities for postgraduate students, as student work visas are affected by the changes. The Universities UK survey published in 2014 showed a change in applications for study in 2014-15 compared to the previous year. In particular, 'students from certain countries, like India, were shown to be increasingly attending institutions in other countries, while demand for UK study continues to decline' (UUK 2014, p20; Marginson 2014). Although some of these changes are beyond the control of the universities themselves, it could be argued that, given the above data, the international student experience has thus become increasingly crucial to UK universities. Developing a positive and welcoming reputation internationally is not easily achieved, but can be lost within the current market (Universities UK Report 2011 – Response to the student immigration system): The international student experience therefore remains an important part in the international student's decision to study abroad.

The international student experience is a widely researched phenomenon (Caruana and Spurling 2007). Various researchers have highlighted the potential for individuals to construct new identities during their study abroad. It is through social interactions with others that such identities are constructed (Gu et al 2010; Pham and Saltmarsh 2013; Block 2010). 'International students may face new and challenging environments where they may have different responses to their sense of belonging and representation of identities' Pham and Saltmarsh 2013, p132). For example, identification with co-nationals during study abroad can foster a stronger cultural

heritage identity for an individual (Searle and Ward 1990). For example individuals were observed to be pragmatic in their choice of networking (Pham and Saltmarsh 2013).

Within the field of research into the international student experience, it is essential to create opportunities where individuals can reflect on their everyday social contacts and encounters. Research interviews can create opportunities to explore spaces of interdependence and habitual engagement where identity and attitudes are formed and where struggles over place and entitlement are played (Armin 2002). This may apply to sojourners who study abroad for a short period of time, and/or those who migrate to a new country to live.

Doherty and Singh (2005) suggest that universities consist of 'zones of contact' where social interaction takes place between individuals within a number of different environments. Schwartz et al (2006) suggest that acculturation within new environments can represent changes in one's own cultural identity. Cultural identity is underpinned by cultural values and beliefs which have the potential to change during study abroad (Block 2010; Pham and Saltmarsh 2013). It would follow that, for an international student, 'selected goals, values and beliefs drawn from the receiving culture may become integrated into one's personal identity (Pham and Saltmarsh 2013). Notwithstanding this, the nature and extent to which changes in cultural identity may be achieved is debated within the literature. Montgomery (2010) suggests that international students do not wish to abandon the educational background and cultural identities that they brought to the UK; by contrast, they are eager to layer new learning and new identities on top. Meanwhile, Hirst (2007) suggests that we must acknowledge the agency of the individual in adopting discursive positions as students move in and out of these positions. A further cautionary note is provided by Hawkes (2014), who emphasises that 'the academic and social worlds are linked in complex ways, with events in the class affecting those outside and vice versa. It is therefore of both theoretical and practical interest to those working with international students to have a holistic and deep understanding of their students' lives, cultures and identities' (Hawkes 2014, p5).

The research findings above appear to support the view that higher education, and moreover international study abroad, is a site for identity formation. Whilst recognising that identity is constructed within social interactions, research on international student identity needs to address the social interactions as they arise for the individual. This would incorporate a more fluid understanding of international student identity, a concept which is both temporal and dynamic, and which develops across a range of social interactions. Block (2010) has identified temporary identity positions within social situations which are external to the classroom setting. Although, his research was framed within a second language context his research does offer support for the temporary nature of identity positions that students reveal in their everyday social interactions within a new culture.

Moreover, it has been suggested that 'research about international students has too often been done in the absence of recognition of the importance of students' social context: it has neither captured the authentic lives of these students, nor recognized their capability for agency and action' (Pham and Saltmarsh 2013:133). A discursive approach to international student identity focusing across a wider range of social settings, and which acknowledges the notion of agency of the individual and the occurrence of the temporary nature of identity positions held, would be beneficial. Thus, the previous oversimplification and generalisations of the international student experience may be avoided, and a better understanding of the international student experience achieved.

As a practitioner, this approach allows me to deepen my understanding of the individual's own personal experiences, as well as the impact their experiences had on shaping their own identity during their overseas studies. By incorporating such identity research into the international student experience literature, support services as well as academic staff would be able to review their own practices in a more informed way.

Significance of the Study

There has been a considerable expansion in the number of international students studying abroad over the past decade. Substantial progress has also been made in meeting these students' changing expectations about the quality and delivery of the academic experience. Projects which involve international students can offer a valuable opportunity to develop cross-cultural skills and understanding amongst university staff. 'The resulting professional and personal enrichment is particularly pertinent in our globalised education environment' (Hughes 2004:7).

A closer examination of the literature on the international student experience reveals a growing interest in the nature of international student identity. However, various challenges remain: to build and develop a deeper understanding of study abroad; to gather 'authentic' accounts of the international student experience and to develop more discursive accounts of international student identity across a wider set of social situations. Torres et al (2009) suggest that identity research is pivotal in understanding the international student experience, as this will provide further understanding of the ways in which individuals and their environments interact in the social construction of identity formation.

This research offers a limited study of international students at one university, exploring how they network, how they change and how they create temporary identity positions. Its contribution to the literature lies in the individual accounts of international student identity through a discursive lens. The discursive nature of 'identity' adopted by the students is referred to as 'identity work', which occurs within and beyond classroom settings. By extending the conceptual framework through the discursive practices of the international student experience, 'identity work' can be located at the individual, relational, organisational levels, and moreover at the level of wider society.

This study explores the initial experiences of international Masters' students as they study, work and live in the UK and how these experiences are reflected in their own personal 'identity work'. The longitudinal nature of the data collection was designed in such a way as to provide opportunities to explore the subtle yet significant changes that international students have experienced. I opted for a more situated approach in my research, and to rely on students' self-reported perceptions of their experiences in

studying and living abroad, thereby providing a more ‘holistic view’ of the international student experience.

The choice of semi-structured interviews for data collection has the potential for generating self-reported accounts, but it nevertheless presents certain challenges. Prior to undertaking this research I had only interviewed native English speakers in interview situations. Hughes (2004) suggests that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for data collection from international students as it helps address instances of miscommunication, enabling the researcher or the student to repeat or rephrase. My research has also offered an opportunity for self-reflection with regards to data collection, particularly in terms of insider/outsider views of the practitioner-researcher. Hughes (2004) also suggests that, for ethical and practical reasons, researchers need to recognise and respond sensitively to the infinitely varying personal and cultural attributes of international students, especially in relation to culture shock, differences in norms and styles of interpersonal communication, as well as marked differences in their educational backgrounds and traditions.

The use of snowball sampling criteria allowed for diversity within the participants’ own individual accounts of their own international student experience. Diversity amongst cultural groups was considered in terms of the age, gender, previous work experience and educational backgrounds of the participants, as suggested by Ngo (2008), in an attempt to avoid an overly monolithic account of cultural groups.

The micro-level aspects of the internationalisation of higher education, such as the international student experience, are evidently important to UK higher education institutions. Both the institutional and individual levels of internationalisation need further depth and research (Sanderson 2008). Furthermore, studies such as Montgomery 2010; Block 2010; Hawkes 2014; and Ngo 2008 support this perception of the paucity of research into the complex relationship between the wider social context and academic culture. The ‘identity work’ of international students offers a path to meet the need of enriching the discussion at the individual actor level of internationalisation (Torres et al 2009; Block 2010; and Koehne 2005). However, the individual level needs to become a part of the language of international student transition, induction and adaptation. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the

discursive nature of internationalisation (Caruana and Spurling 2007) as these particular studies constitute a minority in the existing literature.

'Identity work' undertaken by an individual within the learning context does not simply require acculturation but the negotiation of new identity positions within the classroom and beyond (Ngo 2008). More attention should be paid to the nature of relationships within the new culture and further exploration of the power differentials within social situations between individuals and members of the host culture is required. In turn, this would help explain further this impacts on an individual's identity they negotiate their study abroad.

Structure of the Thesis

This chapter has discussed what inspired me to undertake this research in the context of my professional role as a teacher on a full-time business master's programme. It has outlined the challenges of teaching a growing proportion of international students and my personal motivation to undertake this research as part of my professional development in order to understand the international student experience. Background information such as the research and policy context has been briefly provided, as well as the conceptual framework and methodology. An overview of the structure of the thesis is also provided

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature, focusing on the international student experience, as well as the nature of identity work amongst international students.

Chapter Three describes the methodological underpinning of the research study and the methods drawn from this approach. The qualitative nature of the research study is outlined and the research participants are introduced, along with a discussion of the choice of in-depth semi-structured interviews. The 'directed content analysis' approach, which is both deductive and inductive, is explained, with the opportunity for the emergence of new categories (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

Chapter Four discusses the participants' data using the individual and relational themes that developed.

Chapter Five discusses the participants' data using the organisational and societal themes to frame the discussion.

Chapter Six provides a discussion of the data and relates back to the literature.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions and implications for the study

Summary

This research represents both my personal and professional interest in understanding the international student experience in the context of 'identity work'. It focuses on seven international students as they study, work and live in the UK. 'Identity work' as it is referred to in this thesis, is a discursive approach which allows for the social construction of the social situation and how the individual perceives him/herself. In addition, identity work may occur for the individual in a range of different social situations.

The following chapter provides a literature review of 'internationalisation' with a particular focus on the experiences of international students. It highlights the contribution that 'identity work' can make to our understanding of the nature of the international student experiences and how this impacts on an individual's identity.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by other scholars and researchers, their methodology and methods used and their findings. A review of such literature will enable the researcher to ascertain and assemble what is known about a particular topic. The review gives the researcher a more in-depth view of the research topic. This process helps lay a foundation upon which researchers can build; it assists in identifying gaps in the literature, and enables researchers to have a more thorough grasp of the research problem and thereby set their own research questions.

This literature review chapter is divided into three parts. The first part examines the attempts by authors to define Internationalisation in higher education, research on student mobility patterns and the institutional responses to Internationalisation in higher education. The second part explores the literature on the experiences of international students, which range from the benefits of studying abroad as well as the challenges that these students may encounter. Finally, the third part reviews the research conducted on international students in terms of their 'identity'. The case is then made for a discursive approach to identity, and the need to reject the tendency to homogenize international students.

What is the internationalisation of higher education?

"Internationalisation is now firmly on the UK education agenda, of that there can be little question" (De Vita and Case 2003:383). Many British universities, particularly the post-1992 'new' universities, have experienced increasing pressure to generate income through the recruitment of international students (which has largely meant non-EU students). "The emergence of rapidly growing powerful economies in India and China has created a huge international market for western universities" (Elkin et al 2005:319).The UKCOSA report (2004) recognises the financial and cultural benefits

of recruiting international students; "…they [international students] are vital to the current and future health of UK further and higher education: the international diversity on our campuses enriches the environment for all staff and students" (p1).

Additionally, international students bring in fee income; their presence makes viable courses which would otherwise close due to lack of numbers, and they constitute a very significant proportion of the research student population, whose work is vital to maintaining and renewing academic communities. It would appear that the UK is not alone in the continuing expansion of the overseas student market, and that policy development in several countries is moving in the direction of the continued expansion and globalisation of the higher education market (West and Dimitropoulos 1999). Mobility, therefore, does not occur only within Europe. Knight (2003) highlights the evolution of Internationalisation as a concern of higher education globally. "Internationalisation at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003). Kameoka (1996) argues that governments are increasingly looking at higher education as playing a part in their wider policy objectives, many of which have a strong international emphasis. This broad definition encompasses the internationalisation of higher education (HE) from an academic perspective (to improve the curriculum) and from a market perspective (to increase revenue by recruiting international students as distance or campus-based students).

The British Council report Vision 2020 (Böhm 2004), states that there is potential for a tripling of the number of international students coming to the UK over the next 15 years. This constitutes an enormous challenge to institutions if they are to enhance or even simply maintain the current high satisfaction ratings international students have registered in the survey. However, the Vision 2020 report also states that the market is volatile, and any increases are dependent on the UK maintaining its competitive edge. Koutsantonis (2006) reported that 44 out of 51 universities tackled Internationalisation through the recruitment of international students; moreover, only 6 of the universities said they would enhance the international experience of home students, whilst only four Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) referred to the implementation of the Bologna Process in their Internationalisation plans. Research

conducted by the American Council on Education in 2006 concluded that there were a range of responses to the Internationalisation agenda, ranging from narrow adjustments to in-depth transformational changes. Elkin et al (2008) also support the view that there is a lack of consensus on the concept of Internationalisation. Most universities have a number of overseas students and an International Office; however, in practice there is no agreement about what internationalisation means. This can range from having an overseas campus, such as is the case with Nottingham University in China, whilst another university may bring a large number of students to study on campus at the home university (University Of Lincoln); meanwhile, other institutions may implement extensive exchange programmes (Oxford Brookes University) or study abroad schemes.

This lack of coherence around the term 'Internationalisation' is played down in the literature; (Elkin et al 2008) suggest that Internationalisation of the curriculum is often synonymously used with "Internationalisation", and consequently the terminology is confusing. For some, internationalisation may simply mean the provision of services across the university, whilst for others it entails focusing on the educational content of the curriculum, and extends to both domestic and foreign students. The suggestion that Internationalisation should "extend beyond the curriculum to the whole university, integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions" is provided by Knight 1999 (Elkin et al 2008:241). Although there is no agreement in terms of what "Internationalisation" constitutes, many UK HIGHER Education Institutions (HEI's) are developing responses to internationalisation through a recruitment agenda, targeting non-EU international students. A number of studies focus on the institutional choices that international students make (Cubillo et al 2006; Maringe and Carter 2007). Whilst other HEI's may face a major dilemma where staff find themselves in a situation where they just happen to teach some international students (Koutsantoni 2006). 'It is clear that Internationalisation means different things to different people and as a result there is a great diversity of interpretations attributed to the concept' (Knight 1999:13).

Harman (2005) suggests that the term 'internationalisation of higher education' is used in different ways by Non-Government Organizations (NGO's), the World Bank,

UNESCO, governments, universities and colleges and it can be defined in quite broad terms. Harman states that:

> Internationalisation is one or more of the following activities: international movement of students between countries; international movement of academic staff and researchers; internationalized curricula in order to achieve better understandings about other people and cultures, and competence in foreign languages; international links between nation states through open learning programs and new technologies; bi-lateral links between government and HEI's in different countries for collaboration in research, curriculum development, student and staff exchange and other international activities; multi-national collaborations such as via international organisations or through consortia such as Universities Global; and finally export education where education services are offered on a commercial basis in other countries, with students either in their home country or in the country of the provider (Harman 2005:120).

Further insights into the nature of Internationalisation of higher education are provided by Stier (2002) and de Wit (1995). Stier, for example, defines internationalisation as "a process of exchange and mutual influence, where the actors are presumably 'nations'. On the other hand internationalisation is commonly conceptualised as an ideology or policy of some sort" (Stier, 2002:2). In de Wit's definition, the term 'internationalisation' is replaced by 'international education' and is defined in relation to: the curriculum; student, staff and programme exchanges, and also in relation to the ethos and attitude of the institution (de Wit 1995). A useful definition of Internationalisation is provided by Knight:

> The process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university. An international dimension means a perspective, activity or service which introduces or integrates an international/ intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of an institution of higher learning (Knight 1995:28).

It would appear that the individual institution's interpretation of internationalisation does not appear to be questioned by Knight. For example, her definition lacks insight into the political, economic and organizational context of the higher education institutions. A more recent definition offered by Knight in 2003 fails to address the complexities involved. Despite Knight (2004) acknowledging that the real process of Internationalisation is actually taking place within institutions, her definition, according

to Sanderson, fails to capture the increasing interest in Internationalisation activities at the sector and national levels (Sanderson 2008).

Elliott (1998) suggests that the role of the government is to encourage higher education institutions to respond to globalisation at the economic and social level. However, Elliott's definition is open to the same criticism as Knight's, as it does not refer to the numerous variables that may be encountered. For example: "…future developments in the globalisation of higher education are difficult to predict; there are too many variables" (Marginson and van der Wende 2007:70). Moreover, each of the definitions cited above are free from ideological baggage, and they refer to internationalisation of higher education and the impact of globalisation on higher sector in a neutral manner. By so doing, these definitions promote a view of internationalisation which is standardised, de-contextualised, and ahistorical (Caruana & Spurling 2006). Caruana & Spurling (2006) suggest that few theorists actually challenge the nature of the internationalisation agenda.

A collection of Australian research, edited by Ninnes and Hellsten and published by the Comparative Education Research Centre in 2005, adopted a critical stance on pedagogy and policy within the context of internationalizing Higher Education. This book represents a move to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, practices and beliefs, and it addresses the ambiguities, tensions and contradictions within Internationalisation. This research incorporates the experiences of staff, international students and home students in a highly-commoditised higher education environment. A further critique is offered by Marginson and van der Wende (2007), who do not regard globalisation as a universal phenomenon, and acknowledge the locality of the Internationalisation. Nuances such as language, academic culture, nation and world region may influence the type of institutional response (Marginson and van der Wende 2007). They further suggest that we recognise that higher education institutions do not operate in a vacuum, nor are they ahistorical and that much of the extent and nature of Internationalisation will depend on the level of international networking that already exists. For example, the emphasis in Europe regarding 'Internationalisation' has been one of the 'Europeanization' of higher education, which has witnessed the introduction of initiatives such as ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) and the former SOCRATES programme, both of which

encouraged students to study in other countries. There are examples of higher education institutions that have recruited from European countries for more than two decades and have developed partnerships with other institutions through the ERASMUS scheme, projects which were not initiated for commercial gain.

Caruana and Spurling (2007) call for a review of the nature of 'Internationalisation' in order for it to incorporate social, cultural, moral and ethical dimensions that would transcend the narrow economic focus of Internationalisation. This would help highlight the more subtle differences in how 'Internationalisation' is defined both institutionally and individually. Such an insight would reinforce the idea of 'agency'' that is promoted by Scott (1998), where the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world is considered. Regarding 'Internationalisation' in this way may open up what may constitute 'Internationalisation' in practice, and would encourage a more critical and 'socially constructed' view of individuals and institutions. These divergences in meanings and the lack of a shared understanding of the Internationalisation of higher education may suggest the existence of sub-cultures within institutions, academic staff and students, a notion which challenges the homogenized accounts of institutional and individualised Internationalisation.

Whilst the drive to internationalize is good for business for universities in the developed West, it comes at a cost. One possible direction is shifting the status quo and changing the culture within universities. Changes that may be required might consist of the move towards a commodity-based education approach, as well as a cultural shift to deliver products to a diverse student body. (Loxley et al 2014) observe that "…the emerging culture of the university is one in which education is treated as a commodity" (p220). This view of education has been identified in studies conducted by (Currie, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Delucchi & Korgen, 2002; Smith, 2000; Schapper & Mayson 2005; Ball 2003).

In addition, the need to respond to a diverse student body is problematic for many institutional staff (both academic and administrative). Institutional barriers include: a lack of understanding of cultural issues and perspectives, a lack of short-term incentives and a shortage of time to learn about how other cultures learn and think (Higher Education Academy, 2005). Further obstacles to operationalize

Internationalisation include: a lack of funds, difficulty in conducting international research and insufficient faculty interest (Slanehi-Sangari and Foster 1999 in Caruana and Spurling 2006). Although Internationalisation has been described as a lifebelt, for many universities its importance can be described as existing at an early stage of development, and being only marginally integrated (Maringe 2008; Elkin et al 2005). Kandakei et al (2006) emphasise that internationalisation is not simply an issue of student mobility, but an issue of the strategic transformation of higher education institutions.

The UK as a destination for international students

The UK is primarily a 'host' country for foreign students (two-thirds of whom are from non-EU countries, namely China and India). Within the past decade fewer UK students have been leaving to study abroad as compared to the numbers of international students coming to the UK. However, the findings of the Broadening Horizons 2015 report suggest that there is currently a growing interest in studying abroad amongst UK students. Despite this increased interest in studying abroad, home students are unlikely to be familiar with the challenges that international students might face whilst studying abroad.

The UK ranked second to the US in 2008 as a destination for foreign students, and has progressively moved up the list in terms of its global ranking: 5th in 1980, 4th in 1990, and 2nd since 2000 (de Wit 2008a: 35-36). The emergence of new arrivals in the global marketplace has meant that, with growing numbers of options available, more students are now opting to study closer to home. In 2012, the United Arab Emirates overtook the UK in attracting students from the Arab states (UUK, 2014). Despite holding second place behind the USA, the UK market has grown at a significantly slower pace than some of its main competitors (OECD 2008). A survey conducted in 2014 by UUK (Universities UK) revealed a continued decline in entrants and applications to the UK from the Indian subcontinent, and provided evidence to suggest that growing numbers of these students are opting for the United States and Australia.

Studies on degree mobility also reveal academic and social selectivity on the part of international students – indicated by parental wealth, a predominantly independent-sector school background and a personal/family history of travel and international links (King et al 2010). For example, a common question amongst Chinese parents is what ranking the respective UK higher education institution has. The nuances of 'Internationalisation' are to some extent revealed in a study by HEFCE in 2004 (The Higher Education Funding Council for England). The study identified 3 types of student mobility: mobility for an entire programme of study/degree; mobility for part of the programme, termed credit mobility, and voluntary mobility undertaken for a variety of personal reasons. There appears to be a consensus in the literature that mobile students represent, to some extent, a 'privileged' selection from the overall population of third-level students (King et al 2010). Academic institutions tend to have strong links and collaborations with certain key institutions overseas, and once these links are fostered and developed, the supply of students tends to perpetuate. King et al (2010) suggest that patterns in student mobility tend to mirror that of 'migration theory', where individuals (migrants) tend to go to places or countries where there are already migrants of the same nationality or ethnic group. However, we must recognise that recruitment patterns of international students may be prone to change in the UK.

What benefits are there to studying abroad in the UK?

It is argued that international students are looking for 'something British', and that they perceive the standard of British education to be excellent, but that this perception is not borne out when they arrive in the UK (Kingston and Forland, 2004; Peters 2005). Students expect to find 'better education' in the UK, which is often based on the valuing of UK Higher Education in the home culture (Coates in Caruana & Spurling 2006). Thus, it could be claimed that the large number of international students in UK HEIs is a vindication of the quality of the UK's higher education system in the global market.

Moreover, research findings suggest that there are several benefits to studying in the UK and these include: cross improvement in a foreign language, employment, cross cultural interaction and cross cultural experience.

Students chose to study in the UK is to improve their chances of getting a good job and to improve their foreign language competence (Student Services Centre, 2005, West, 2000, Coates, 2005, Peters, 2005; Leask 2005) in Caruana and Spurling (2007). More recent research findings also support the view that English language proficiency, intercultural sensitivity and the opportunity for enhanced career prospects are cited by students as consequences of studying in the UK (Huang et al 2014; and BIS Report 2013).There is a necessity to equip graduates to function effectively in the complexity and uncertainty of the knowledge economy (Caruana and Hanstock 2003). Prime Minister Initiative 2 (PMI2) has funded a number of international student employability projects. I-graduate have also published guides for international students about the labour market in 15 different countries. “In a globalized knowledge economy, Western higher education credentials are increasingly portrayed as the key or path to higher status, secure ‘professional employment” (Doherty & Singh in Ninnes & Hellsten 2005, p57). This is particularly the case where: “…traditional teaching methods in China are challenged to develop graduates with global thinking, cross-cultural communication skills and the savvy to do business with foreign counterparts” (Guo & van der Heijden 2008, p9).

There is also evidence to suggest that a number of international students seek work in the UK after graduation. Students may frame study abroad in terms of an opportunity of ‘enhanced employability’, where students are imagined as future global professionals, prepared for participation in an increasingly global society (Leask 1999 & 2005; Knight & de Wit 1995; Leask 2001; Coleman 2011; Di Pietro 2013; Huang et al 2013). ‘Students from the Asian sub-continent (59%, SE Asia 52%, Africa 43% and Asia 41%) were the most likely to intend working in the UK after graduation’ (HECSU Report 2005, p87). In the frequently-cited work of Ong (1999), education is frequently regarded as a means of gaining residency, where it is believed to open up new employment opportunities for individuals. The HEA (2014) suggest that ‘it is not uncommon for international students to expect the university to find them a job when they graduate, and family expectations may play an important role for international students in the expectations that they have’ (HEA 2014:4). In contrast, Huang et al (2014) suggest that ‘mainland Chinese students return home following graduation’ (p178) and do not remain in the UK to work. Nevertheless, their interpretation of their future employability has been informed by the policies and practices of the host

country (de Wit 2011). Arguably, there should be a concerted effort to encourage institutions to focus on enhancing graduate employability, both in the source countries and in the UK, which would benefit students and make UK international education more globally competitive (Marginson 2014).

Students and UK mobility managers believe that study abroad also brings benefits such as languages, intercultural skills and a flexibility of outlook (King et al 2010; Young et al 2013). A study conducted by Coleman (2011) on students from two UK universities suggests that 'skills acquired through study abroad contribute to job performance' (p5).

Cross-cultural experience and interaction during study abroad

There is evidence to suggest that students cite cross-cultural experience and interaction as an important factor in their choice (Coates, 2005, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002 in Caruana and Spurling 2007).

The literature on the experience of overseas students extends over a much longer period and covers issues such as: assimilation, integration and acculturation of students studying overseas (Ward and Kennedy 1994; Church 1982; Adelman 1988; Berry et al 1987; Ying & Liese 1991). This literature is particularly useful in exploring some of the perceived benefits that are assumed to arise from study abroad. In brief, where the student has had little or no exposure to the host culture, it is felt that the process of 'acculturation' can be slowed down. Although there may be differences in terms of accounting for different acculturation patterns, it is generally acknowledged that those students moving from a collectivist culture (including countries such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America) to that of a more individualist culture, such as the UK, are more likely to find it more difficult to integrate and develop cross-cultural understanding (Church 1982).

Cross-cultural understanding can include how we feel, behave and change when we find ourselves in a new cultural environment. In a new cultural environment, individuals are required to decode signs that they are not used to, to continuously fine-tune their expected scenarios and their representations of the new place as they find their former

expectations falsified. ‘International students affected by culture shock may experience confusion, anxiety, disorientation, suspicion, bewilderment, perplexity and intense desire to be somewhere else’ (Ward et al 2001:270). Oberg (1954) refers to this process as ‘culture shock’, which can often have a dramatic effect of the individual. As a consequence of this culture shock, it is argued that individuals set in motion a series of psychological mechanisms to help them regain comfort, a feeling of security and good thoughts about themselves. However, individuals differ greatly as regards the degree to which culture shock affects them. On experiencing the new culture, individuals may be fascinated. This honeymoon stage may last from a few days or weeks to six months, depending on the circumstances. Hostilities to the new culture can also be experienced, whereby the individual finds difficulty in adjusting, and the reasons for this are internalised, and may result in members of the new culture being regarded in a negative manner. Oberg (1954) suggests that culture shock produces two outcomes as individuals experience the frustration and anxiety of a new culture. For example the individual rejects the environment that causes the discomfort, and he or she regresses back to a familiar environment, such as his or her home environment. Inevitably this reaction tends to increase the isolation of the unhappy student, because people sense antagonism and may begin to avoid him or her. The process of adjustment is evident where the individual comes to a place of acceptance, accepting the new way of life. A complete adjustment is where you not only accept the foods, drinks, habits and customs, but actually begin to enjoy them (Oberg 1954).

The acculturation process is often presented as a continuum which predicts that the individual moves through each stage of culture shock (Mitchell and Myles 2010). This movement between the stages is linear in fashion, and it fails to address the motivations and experiences of the individual. Gu (2009) suggests that factors such as an individual’s motivations and experiences are important during their study abroad, and should be given further consideration as they can be key to the student experience. For example it is sometimes assumed that ‘intercultural learning’ is an automatic outcome and benefit of intercultural contact, whether that be contact resulting from having a range of cultures together on campus (AEI 1998:2: Block 2010) or in class. Intercultural learning is not always successful, and we must be reminded that adjusting to a new culture requires more than simply ‘learning’ the new culture. Intercultural learning uses a self-reporting methodology, so it is not possible to claim

that study abroad programs cause participants to change. However, the Intercultural Development Inventory (Bennett 1993), assesses the ability to perceive and organize cultural differences by collecting valid and reliable quantitative data. To learn to engage appropriately and effectively in the new culture adaptation and intercultural learning is required, and these involve both an understanding and acceptance of the new culture (Bochner 1977).

It would seem that adjustment is regarded as the ultimate aim of the study abroad, and therefore culture shock and cultural adaptation should be considered as an achievement (Brown and Holloway 2008). "Although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development and personal growth" (Adler 1975:14). For Adler, the more new experiences there are, the more opportunities there are for personal development. Acculturation theorists who are familiar with the experiences of immigrants in new cultures have attempted to identify the predictive factors of acculturative stress (Berry et al 1987; Constantine et al 2004), which can be categorised into psychological predictors, such as depression/distress, and social and linguistic predictors, such as family cohesion, social networks and language proficiency (Berry et al 1987). Acculturative stress is usually identified through the correlation of these factors. Whilst this research is useful in its consideration of acculturative stress, we must acknowledge that, unlike immigrants, international students may possibly have a stronger desire to return to their homeland, and may possibly remain culturally isolated from the new culture (Lueck & Wilson 2010). Westernization and a previous encounter with a white Anglo-approach, however, were found to be predictive of lower acculturative stress (Berry et al 1987). Contrastingly, Jang & Kim (2010) found that personality and culture play a significant role in the experiences of students who study abroad. Despite the huge interest in sojourner adjustment, there is still a lack of qualitative as well as of longitudinal research that would offer more detailed insights into intercultural learning processes during overseas stays (Weidemann 2009:1).

The social interaction between host and international students is seen to play an important role in the cross cultural experience gained by an individual. The following section will discuss some of the issues that can impact on this interaction.

Interactions with students from the 'host' culture

The teaching and learning experience of the international student can be influenced by the interactions with both host and international students. A large body of evidence suggests that home students do not necessarily integrate effectively with international students in Australian universities and in the UK (Caruana and Spurling 2007; Ninnes and Hellsten 2005; Singh 2005; Prescott & Hellsten 2005 and Huang 2008). In addition, some evidence suggests that the assumption that the proximity of host and international students in terms of intercultural contact can create intercultural learning/competence is misplaced (Volet and Ang 1998; Robertson and Lane 2000). Situations where host students do not engage with international students in a classroom situation are a common occurrence. Few students believed that students from different cultures work well together (Ward et al 2005). Less than half of the respondents in a survey of students identified international students as presenting an opportunity to learn about other cultures (Ward et al 2005). Singh (2005) refers to this as 'zone of isolationism', suggesting that 'most international students move along quite specific routes that are structured, if not dictated, by political, economic, intercultural and global/local relations' (Singh in Ninnes & Helsten 2005:26), which may be beyond their control. An example of an interview extract from Singh illustrates this:

"…because they think we can't speak English very well, they seem to think we are idiots. They are not willing to talk, they are afraid" (Singh 2005:26)

A number of factors were cited by host and international students in this research to account for the lack of interaction between international and host students. These include: separate accommodation facilities; timetabling constraints which may impact on the homogeneity of the group in the seminar; restricted leisure time of host students due to part-time employment and the monolingual aspect of the host students. More specific issues included the difference in cultural practices of 'taking turns' in conversations, leaving the international students feeling marginalised, as the host students were either unaware of not concerned about the absence of voice from the others. A final issue is that the host students lack experience in moving beyond a monolingual context, and therefore often lose their patience (Singh 2005). In the UK, the International Student Experience Report (UNITE 2006) found that students did not

generally perceive international students negatively, but were indifferent to interaction with them, and many did not identify the benefits associated with inter-cultural contact per se.

Arkoudis et al (2010) identified several potential obstacles to student interaction from both the teaching and the learning perspectives. On the teaching side, the main impediments seem to be the limited time available to foster interaction, particularly when classes are large and the curriculum is 'content-heavy'. Such conditions tend to discourage staff from prioritising peer interaction within the curriculum, at least in any planned and systematic sense. In relation to student learning, both staff and students identified a number of challenges to effective interactions, including: differing levels of English language proficiency; limited time spent on campus due to competing commitments such as paid work and finally a lack of a 'common ground' between domestic and international students due to differences in academic priorities and learning experiences, as well as in their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Singh (2005) makes an important contribution to the perceived nature of universities and challenges the notion that universities exist as a socio-cultural whole. Thus, it is not a matter of bringing a unified Anglo-ethnic student population into contact with other distinct socio-cultural whole, let us say German students. Singh suggests that "Universities are zones of multiple, contested and contradictory contacts, both positive and negative. A contact zone in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict" (Singh in Ninnes & Hellsten 2005:32). How do international students cope in such contexts? An international student may construct their own 'survival networks', wherein the purpose is mainly 'getting by', the network is more prevalent and tends to revolve around similarities of nationality, gender or a shared mother tongue or surviving the present situation. Other networks may constitute 'networks for future assistance' Robinson (2005). There is, however, also some regret on the part of international students at the lack of networking between different (national) groups, and a notion of being 'stuck' in national groupings reports Robinson.

As previously discussed, the contact zone between international students and host students is constrained by having to negotiate a new language as well as different pedagogical practices. The non-academic issues which cause most stress to international students are finance and friendships (Allen and Higgins 1994; UKCOSA 2004). However, within such a contact zone, UK people – in particular students – are perceived as unfriendly (Allen and Higgins 1994; Ledwith and Seymour 2001). Notwithstanding this point, the over-recruitment of international students (or the under-recruitment of home students!), especially on business, computing and postgraduate courses, means there may be few UK classmates for international students to befriend (Peters 2005). Even where international students enter directly into the second or third year of a programme, they may find that the domestic students' friendships are already formed (Ledwith and Seymour 2001). Situations also arise where UK students choose to work with other British students rather than with international students, because their perceived poor English language competency is seen as an impediment to a good group mark (Cathcart et al 2005).

An internationalized curriculum, it is suggested, can begin to address the issue of interaction between host and international students. Evidence suggests that undergraduate programmes generally cater for UK students, thereby missing the opportunity to encourage learning from other cultures (Shiel 2006). The prevalence of dominant western cultural literacy is apparently more widespread with its apparent emphasis on assimilation (Caruana and Spurling 2007:14: Madge et al 2009). A stand-alone internationalized curriculum may not achieve interaction between international students and UK students, therefore the motivation to interact must be encouraged. However, Dominic Scott, the CEO of the UK Council for International Student Affairs believes that, whilst important, the institutional response to encouraging interaction and integration is patchy across UK higher education (Whitehead 2011). More recent research suggests that there has been some improvement in the achievement of integration between international and home students (British Council 2014).

The experience of international students and the internationalising of the curriculum form a substantial proportion of the literature on internationalisation. In an extensive review of this literature, international students were commonly 'homogenised', so

much so that even issues of ‘gender’ were rarely mentioned (Caruana and Spurling 2007).

The use of homogeneous groups draws attention away from the experiences of the individual. Although the problems that international students encounter include culture shock both in terms of socio-cultural as well as academic adjustment, the experiences of students are not universal; each individual can have markedly different experiences. In addition, the support systems that have been put in place by universities tend to address problems of adjustment, yet generally emphasise that it is international students who need to adjust to their new environment, not vice versa, with no questioning of whether the institution is able to support these students. In addition, little attention is given to the need to support UK students in terms of their own adjustment to working in a more diverse teaching and learning environment. It would seem that there is an assumption that UK students will willingly interact; or, in a worst case scenario, several attempts are made by the institution to encourage interaction, and these are not as successful as anticipated. Furthermore, a review of the literature seems to suggest that there is also a lack of discussion of what ‘adjustment’ actually should mean within an internationalised higher education institution (Caruana & Spurling 2006:113).

Whilst UK higher education appears to continue to be a popular destination in terms of an opportunity to increase inter-cultural competency as well as to enhance overall employability, there appears to be a need to review the experiences of all students, both international and UK students, whilst exploring more in-depth the experiences of individual students and recognising the diversity that can exist within cultural groups.

The following section discusses the academic related issues cited in the literature

Academic Adjustment: Problems that international students experience

The academic achievement of international students in the UK is lower, with international students achieving fewer ‘good degrees’ (Morrison et al.2005). Research suggests that students domiciled in the EU, Asia, Africa & the Middle East performed less well than UK-domiciled students (Caruana and Spurling 2007:111).

Some students are unable to maximise the benefits of their time overseas, as they may be unable to get used to or adapt to the other culture in terms of academic practices which may be different from what the student has experienced prior to their study abroad. For example, Taiwanese students generally have a good level of reading and writing in English, but their abilities in speaking and listening are still relatively poor (Tsay 2000). The very nature of a seminar or lecture relies on the satisfactory implementation of these skills. Lectures tend to focus on a more deductive learning approach, based on a directive one-way flow of information, whereas seminars are more inductive, with the emphasis on students working out and experimenting for themselves (Reece and Walker 2006).

Some universities have responded to academic adjustment issues by offering pre-sessional courses for international students or additional term-time sessions alongside normal classes. UK Universities ask for a minimum of 6 points on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) on entry. However, the existence of numerous reports of problems experienced by international students raises the question of whether such scores are in fact sufficient demonstration of language proficiency for a group of overseas students to study effectively in this country. Added to this, are the institutional responses which are varied in terms of appropriate staffing support. Caruana & Spurling (2006) concluded that earlier literature showed that institutional support was questionable, with newer universities making greater commitment in terms of numbers of permanent staff in this area (Cownie and Wendy, 1996; Hall, 1998). For example: 17% of institutions stick rigidly to stipulated levels of English language ability, just 39% of language support staff are employed on full-time contracts and only 26% on permanent contracts (Cownie and Wendy, 1996).

Although, UK and other Higher Education institutions have responded in terms of supporting overseas students who experience such difficulties, there is still a pre-dominance of western cultural literacy in the learning experience (Caruana and Spurling 2006). For example debates on Internationalisation are often framed within student support services, where international students are constructed as needy and “a counselling case” Leonard and Morely (2003). Similarly:

“one is immediately struck by the emphasis on the problems and need for help which international students are perceived to have...This emphasis on student problems leads to differentiate the international student as a victim, under informed, mismanaged by supervisors, poorly adjusted socially and culturally, and unable to address these problems without help” (Pelletier 2003:15)

Tutors need to develop an awareness of the complexities of studying in a foreign language (Ryan 2005). An evaluation of one’s own teaching practices would readdress the ‘silo mentality’ that occurs in many universities where international student needs are seen as a ‘bolt-on’ issue, and whose needs can be met from support services. Academic staff’s awareness of language, social and cultural issues and learning styles is paramount to addressing the problems of adjustment that international students face, as is the opening up of the notion of ‘good learning’, moving beyond culturally-specific meanings (Jin and Cortazzi 1998). Taken-for-granted cultural ideas about the role and relations of teachers and learners, appropriate teaching and learning styles and methods, the use of textbooks and materials and about what constitutes good work in classrooms need to be reviewed by programme teams within institutions. In practice, awareness of such issues is limited to a small percentage of staff within a university, usually those who have been trained linguistically, or teach English as a Foreign Language or have undergone a period of study abroad themselves.

Caruana & Spurling (2006) suggest that a weakness within the literature on adjustment is its failure to define or discuss what adjustment is within the specific circumstances of the international students (adjustment is usually defined in psychological or socio-cultural terms, and there is an underlying assumption that adjustment should be achieved). This conceptualises the individual as deficient and that the student must successfully adapt. Consequently, this has engendered responses focusing on counselling and providing academic and personal support for international students in the form of study skills support and enhancement programmes which are designed to ease the transition to UK HE, but are nonetheless rooted in the assimilationist model of pedagogy (Luzio-Lockett 1998; Robson and Turner, 2006). A more holistic approach is offered by Janette Ryan, co-author of ‘Teaching International Students – Improving Learning for All’, which advocates that internationalised curricula should embrace the needs and aspirations of home students as well as international students

(Carroll and Ryan 2005). Support for such an approach is also echoed by the Higher Education Academy (2014), and suggest that curriculum content and the pedagogical approaches used by teachers are key vehicles for improving teaching and learning for all students.

Leask's view is that we should address academic adjustment by re-evaluating the role of teachers as 'intercultural learners' (Leask 2004). Such an emphasis would enable teaching staff to reflect on their own teaching practice and address the situations that they find themselves in (Bodycott & Walker 2010). Misunderstandings or a lack of knowledge amongst teaching staff can be alleviated to some extent. A failure to adjust or to review pedagogic practices within the context of a diverse student cohort can lead to a poor quality student experience.

Power relations and pedagogic practice

A failure to review pedagogic practices can lead to situations where the contradictions and complexities surrounding the experience of international students is overlooked. For example, research by Barron and Zeegers (2006) explored the impact of the protocols between supervisor-supervisee in the supervision of postgraduate international students. They highlighted the problematic nature of power within the social interaction of supervisor and supervisee. They note that, within the field of supervision, western customs and practices are privileged, which can impact on the student experience and how international students view themselves. For example, a student may undertake what they perceive to be appropriate within their role as a Masters' or doctoral student, which may include attending staff and student research seminars, spending extensive periods of time in the library and actively publishing. A failure to review pedagogic practice such as supervisory styles or a lack of staff awareness of non-western alternatives meant that some non-western postgraduate students were constructed by some university staff as less able to undertake research programmes (Barron and Zeegers 2006).

However, it is worth noting that students do not offer a homogeneous account in their personal narratives on the internationalisation of higher education (Singh 2005; Montgomery 2010). Reporting on Chinese students during their study abroad~~, Singh~~

found that these students were able to establish a transnational learning community – one which was composed of students from different countries. For example to mitigate against failure, students would spend considerable time in the library or reading entire books, and would speak to Australian-born Chinese who were perceived to be more approachable. However, 'host students' (Australians) were perceived to have less in common with the Chinese students, and therefore unable to share common stories; thus, a view emerged that they had little in common. There appears to be a lack of ability on the part of the host students to create themselves as global/local citizens (Singh 2005). Domestic students have frequently not been taught to move beyond a narrow scope, and generally operate within a monolingual context. This can be evidenced by the lack of patience demonstrated by the host student when an international student is unable express themselves quickly. Inevitably, the problems associated with the interaction of students are played down to prospective international students when making their choices for study abroad.

The increasing presence of overseas students on UK campuses can mean that UK campuses have the potential to develop an international, multicultural atmosphere, which can be of benefit to both host and international students. However, such a view suggests that UK students already possess a level of cultural competency to engage effectively with international students, and that they are open-minded in terms of cultural differences and are perhaps, at best, familiar with foreign language issues and the notion of alienation from one's social and cultural comfort zone. The Warwick Survey on cultural competencies amongst students authored by Reid et al (2010) suggests, however, that there is a conceptual gap between the 'strategic aspirations and grass roots activities within higher education institutions, such as study abroad or exchange programmes. Students who engage in study abroad may not necessarily gain intercultural competency as a result of their experience (De Nooy and Hanna 2003). Reid et al (2010) suggest that that intercultural competency is more likely to be achieved through 'the provision of specialist support which enables students to realise their actual and potential competencies'.

It is apparent from the literature that there exists an opportunity to develop greater awareness of the complexity of the international student experience amongst academic and support staff in higher education. Such related action could seek to

challenge the use of generalisations and the widespread over-simplification of the international student body, and thus the subsequent international student experience. Many authors cite the prevalence of lecturers' stereotypical views of international students as passive, obedient learners, lacking in autonomy, who memorise and are unfamiliar with UK academic culture and are therefore academically 'deficient' (de Vita, 2004; Hills and Thom, 2005; Kingston and Forland, 2004; Morrison et al, 2005; Smith, 2006). Such research findings indicate the prevalence of a lack of cultural competency on the part of staff in terms of meeting the range of needs of a diverse international student base:

> 'The focus within the literature on the students' problems fails to understand the processes by which they arise, or to conceptualise an international student's whole experience' (Caruana and Spurling 2006:114).

This 'deficit' view of international students is unhelpful, and places the responsibility to adjust solely with the international student (Caruana and Spurling 2006). This particular notion of international student identity appears to suggest that international students are required to undertake some form of 'identity work' in order to adapt quickly and effectively to their new environment (Ballard and Clanchy 1997).

However, it is recognised that the reality for some international students will mean that they need to improve their competency in the 'target language', and that some students are not likely to achieve communicative competency. There are a number of reasons for this, ranging from individual personality traits to the idiosyncrasies of particular contexts (Block 2010; Yang et al 2006). Moreover, research funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) suggests that one should not focus entirely on language, as this constitutes a narrow perspective on international students. The research findings suggest that, firstly, curriculum redesign is possible and can override the tendency by institutions to focus only on language difficulties. Secondly, they suggest that the interaction between host and international students can be facilitated through the creation of environments for interaction within the classroom, and this clearly highlights the role of teaching staff (Arkoudis et al 2010).

The existence of conflicting views on the nature of Internationalisation within higher education is evident from the literature. Approaches to internationalisation range from

preparing graduates for future employment in global labour markets, internationalising the curriculum, to the recruitment of international students as a source of income generation. However, the nuances of Internationalisation are less well recognised. We have seen that the UK has maintained a strong recruitment position behind that of the USA, but there are nevertheless conflicting suggestions that the growth rate is slowing, and that the UK is likely to witness changes in the patterns of mobility of international students. The OECD estimates that the UK has a 12.6% share of the global student recruitment market (UUK 2014), with for example Indian students facing increased costs when studying abroad during 2012-2013 due to currency depreciation. However, what is evident is that some subject disciplines appear more attractive than others, with Business & Administrative studies attracting the largest number of international students to one subject discipline (UKCISA 2012). Despite the increasing importance of international recruitment and internationalisation of the curriculum, institutional strategic responses in the UK are varied, with some institutions being further ahead in their development than others. Barriers to effective internationalisation can also include: the lack of staff motivation, senior management support and leadership, staff and student mobility, lack of funds and a lack of awareness of the diverse needs of international students (Thomas 2012).

The Literature on International Student Identity

'Internationalisation' is more than simply the presence of international students on UK campuses and sending UK students overseas (Doherty 2008; Killick 2014). The internationalisation of higher education is a site for identity construction, where individuals and groups of students are ascribed identities and moreover where individuals can undertake 'active identity work'.

Cash cows, global citizens, declining academic standards and cultural mediators.

A 'discursive' approach to identity is where identity is constructed by a third party, and not by the individual themselves. Wider discourses of internationalisation of higher

education of identity can be found in newspapers, institutional policies or government reports (Madge et al 2009; Koehne 2005; Kettle 2004; Devos 2003; Leask 2005a).

On the one hand, we have those that argue that internationalisation is no more than the recruitment of fee-paying international students (Leask 2005a). Those holding this view tend to ascribe identities on international students as 'cash cows' i.e. they are constructed in terms of commodities (Benson 2006; Devos 2003). International student identity can therefore be viewed discursively and can be categorised in terms of positive and negative stereotypes, for example: a means of revenue for Higher Education strongly related to commercialism (Devos, 2003, Habu, 2000). On the other hand, we have those that argue that internationalisation focuses on the preparation for graduates in an increasingly globalised society (Leask 2005a, University of Salford, 2003b; Habu, 2000) and where others refer to the identity of international students as constructed in terms of their 'global citizenship' (Killick 2011; Schweisfurth & Gu 2009; Gu & Schweisfurth 2015).

International students have also been constructed in western educational teaching practices in terms of 'other', as they are expected to assimilate into new educational teaching practices. For example discourses within teaching and learning which focus on language proficiency can encourage a sense of difference. In some cases, international student identity has been linked to falling academic standards, and therefore international students are regarded as being problematic (Devos 2003; Leask 2005a).

Contrastingly, international students have been ascribed identities of 'cultural mediators' who have the potential to enrich their fellow students' experiences (Coates 2005*;* Habu, 2000); treating foreign students as 'rare birds of paradise imported for our fascination and delight' (Douglas 2009:6 in King et al 2010).

Agency of the individual

We must consider the actions of the individual and the possibility of an individual's refusal of certain discourses, both of which construct identities for students as being less able, for example, and allow for an emergence of new identities (Kettle 2004).

The emergence of new identities are suggested by Leask (2005a) where she highlights the ability or agency of the individual to act as drivers of the curriculum and the positioning of international students as future global workers. The existence of additional identities for international students is acknowledged by Leask, who sees students as helping domestic students to become more internationalised. One such example of identity work is evident at Newcastle University, where international students are supported by UK students on peer mentor programmes. A further example was when the University of Lincoln launched its own peer programme in 2011/12, where international students encouraged UK students to gain cross cultural awareness through cross cultural social activities such as a visit to an international restaurant or music event. Students in this context are seen as having a repertoire of identities.

As discussed previously in this chapter it is acknowledged that 'culture shock' is an important part of the international student experience. Here we consider academic/social culture shock and the implications for identity construction. For example, identities such as "victim", "in need of counselling", "suffering from culture shock" are frequently evidenced in the literature. These constitute social constructions of international students, as opposed to the social constructions of 'self' by international students themselves. Bartam (2005) suggested that young people can be dangerously constructed as being hapless, hopeless and in need of therapy (Hayes 2004). International students in particular are portrayed "in a victim role – as in need of help" (Leonard and Morley 2003:5). Much of this portrayal has been driven by the strategies adopted by universities to cope with an increasingly diverse student body. This includes changes to the structure and priorities of institutions where they previously have catered for a narrowly defined group of students (recruitment, admissions, curriculum design, and English language support. Despite such strategies, Bartram (2005) argues that the international student him/herself does not accept such impoverished views of themselves, thus giving rise to some form of "agency" which the student can employ in their own active identity work and in their conversations with themselves and others. The temporal nature and shifting positions of the student's own sense of identity are important in terms of recognising and acknowledging multiplicities, tensions and agency within the term 'international student'. The term 'international student' therefore has no inherent meaning, and is

constructed within the new social interactions the international student finds themselves in (Bartram, 2005).

'Identity Work': Sveningsson and Alvesson

Organisational Behaviour theorists Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) further support the construction of identity within social interactions and moreover the agency of the individual in constructing personal identity. They refer to this as 'identity work' of the individual.

'Identity work' is defined by as the processes of "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165). There is an extent to which identity work can be conscious, and consciousness tends to be raised when there is a degree of self-doubt and self-openness which arises during encounters with others and in perceptions of others, systems and objects. Identity work is therefore that which can be narrated by the individual, within social interactions or conversations (or talk). 'Identity work' of this nature reveals the fluid and temporal nature of identity that is frequently unexplored within a positivist paradigm. 'Identity work' does not view the individual as possessing a fixed identity or fixed personality traits; it regards the individual as an active participant in the construction of their own identity.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) conceptualize identity processes as constituting an interplay between: (a) self-identity- the individual's image of him or herself (Giddens 1991); (b) 'identity work'- the active construction of a self-identity. Self-identity here refers to subjective meaning and experience, and it provides temporary answers to the questions, 'Who am I?, 'What do I stand for?' and 'How should I act?' This definition has its origins in Giddens' concept of self-identity. Giddens takes a different view from those who view 'personal' or 'social identity' as a comparatively conscious set of self-images, traits or social attributes, although the concepts do overlap and share common elements. Giddens' self-identity is conceptualised as a reflexively organised narrative, derived from participation in competing discourses and various experiences. 'Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the

individual. It is the self as reflexively interpreted by the individual which emphasizes the self-awareness of the individual in the identity processes (Giddens 1991).

Identity can no longer be seen as ‘something that is just given’, but has to be understood as something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (Giddens 1991:52). The term ‘identity’ should attempt to capture the ‘plurality, fluidity and complexity’ (Ivanic, 1997:11) of identities which are socially and culturally constructed, and which are always open to contestation and to change by the individual, and allows them to work beyond convenient stereotypes.

This particular use of the term ‘identity work’ implies that the individual is ‘agentic’, where identity is dynamic and inherently complex, and constructed continuously through interaction between the self and others (Beech 2006). ‘Agency’ is demonstrated by individuals as they construct, repair and renew their identity. Within the social sciences, an understanding of ‘identity’ in this way enables identity to be explored and attempts to understand the dynamics of organizations and the people who inhabit them (Block 2005; Alvesson and Wilmott 2002; Giddens 1991). By adopting the notion of ‘identity work’ as being ongoing and discursively constructed by the individual in different social interaction, this approach can assist us to gain a fuller understanding of the processes of the internationalisation of higher education at an individual or micro level, and as lived experience.

Identity, in this sense, is considered to consist of who we are and how we portray ourselves. Block (2010) supports the view that an individual’s identity is created in the space of a conversation (which can take place in a workplace or social environments), where by people create identities within their own talk. He believes that it is through language that people and places are imaginatively constituted in ways that carry implications for who we are or who we claim to be. Block refers to a particular story where a female student studying French constructs an ‘imagined identity’ of herself frequenting French coffee bars, smoking French cigarettes and taking part in intellectually stimulating conversations. The student would be seen to be undertaking identity work in the context of her pending travel to France. From this example we can see new ways of understanding about the nature of identity and the temporary nature of self-identity. Identity is recognised as an ongoing process within spoken

conversations; this is where the individual talks about themselves in terms of their aspirations, experiences and reactions to events or situations (Edwards and Potter 1992; Harre and Gillet 1994; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell & Potter 1972).

A further understanding of the international student experience through a discursive approach to 'identity':

A socially constructed (or discursive) view of identity can be seen as a means of improving our understanding of international student identity as a much more dynamic, fragmented, political and complex process than was previously held to be the case. In the above example, Block provides an example of how an international student may refer to themselves. However, it is recognised that individuals can draw on such discourses as a resource in their own personal identity work. Such a view requires a possible shift in our thinking about identity and the international student experience.. For example, researchers who uphold the positivist paradigm would tend to refer to the individual as possessing identifiable characteristics/personality traits which are considered to be fixed and static, a view which has been predominant for many decades in social psychology. By contrast, the social constructivist view of identity is more 'fluid and dynamic' in nature, asserting that identity is shaped by our social interactions with others and is produced within spoken conversations, or constituted in the discourses mentioned earlier. International student experience, and moreover international student identity, is not a universal phenomenon. International student identity is therefore understood as being constructed and understood in interaction, and is therefore discursive.

'Time' and 'place' are crucial to our understanding of 'identity construction' in this way. Identities can be regarded as 'situated' as illustrated earlier in this chapter by Block (2010), in his reference to an individual's own 'imagined identity', in France. A 'situated identity' means that identities vary depending on where, when and by whom they are articulated. However, within the 'Internationalisation' literature, there is further opportunity to explore the self-narrative of international student identity contained within 'identity work'. A discursive approach to international student identity would mean that the term 'international student' has no inherent meaning, and that the very idea of stability is questioned. This is reflected by Tobbell and Burton (2015) who refer

to the label of international students as an artificially constructed social group where homogeneity in identity is assumed which in reality does not exist.

There is a need therefore to conceptualize international student identity beyond that of the country of origin, religion and language proficiency, rather than merely accepting these as well-tested constructs which are readily agreed upon. There is a need to regard international student identity as socially constructed, identity as negotiated and contested and discursively produced, as suggested by Singh (2005).

A number of theorists (Appadurai, 2000; Bauman, 2000; Castells, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Singh 2005) acknowledge that the old logic of a 'stable identity' is no longer tenable in a world which incorporates instantaneous communication, global travel, electronic finance and mobile capital, all of which result in more fluid social conditions. For example, a student can access information on the internet which impacts on them personally in terms of expectations of pre-travel to the UK; or gain information from Giddens argues that identity can no longer be seen as 'something that is just given', but has to be understood as something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (1991:52). The term 'identity' should attempt to capture the 'plurality, fluidity and complexity' (Ivanic, 1997: 11) of identities which are socially and culturally constructed, and which are always open to contestation and change.

The term 'identity work' proposes a conceptualization of the individual as 'agentic', where identity is dynamic and inherently complex, and constructed continuously through interactions between the self and others (Beech et al 2008). 'Identity work' can be undertaken by individuals as they construct, repair and renew their identity. Within the social sciences, an understanding of 'identity' in this way enables identity to be explored and enables an attempt to be made to understand the dynamics of organizations and the people who inhabit them (Block 2005; Alvesson and Wilmott 2002). By adopting the notion of 'identity work' as ongoing and as discursively constructed by the individual in different social interactions, this notion can assist in a fuller understanding of the processes of internationalisation of higher education at an individual or micro level as lived experience.

International student identity is subject to constant change and renegotiation. Doherty and Singh (2005) support the view that we need to pay more attention to how international students carefully negotiate their identity as they encounter the contradictions between living in globalised times, their investments in diverse cultural capitals and the restrictive identity positions afforded them in an international university, and not to take international student identity as 'a given' or 'taken-for-granted' assumption. Above all, these authors suggest that we must attempt to challenge the convenient use of the 'international student' stereotype, and generalization that all international students experience similar problems and share common characteristics. This is best illustrated, the authors argue, within qualitative research, and by extending the research to explore the individual's own sense of identity as they experience internationalized higher education. Doherty and Singh (2005) call for an autobiographical narrative approach to the internationalisation of higher education through auto-ethnographic research (participation observation) conducted by students themselves about their own experiences and the changes they encounter. Such a move reflects a further development within the Internationalisation of higher education literature.

Moving Beyond the Notion of Identity as Individual Characteristics

A period of study abroad, whether it is a few months or several years, can represent a change in one's education or future career, which requires coping and adapting and readjusting for some people. As a student, being at university can play a part in the development of one's own sense of identity (Dalton 1989). For example, a transition phase such as entering into a new culture, an experience or specific event can impact on an individual's identity. This notion would suggest that identity is more dynamic than previously thought. Often, there has been too much emphasis on the organisational side of international experiences abroad, and not enough on the subjective aspect of international experience and the identity transformation that can occur (Kohonen 2005). In terms of the organisational perspective, an international assignment can be seen as opportunity for personal and professional development and career enhancement which occurs at specific stages of the experience (Kohonen 2005). Kohonen (2005) suggests that more research is required on the subjective

aspect of international experience and identity transformation by looking at how individuals reconstruct their identities, and how enduring those identity changes are. This would not only assist in a better understanding of the micro-level responses to internationalisation by the international student, but would also help explore the multifaceted and complex notion of self-identity. The concept of 'identity work' is a useful tool to articulate the tensions that individuals experience, especially in transitional and transformative circumstances such as in the case of study abroad.

Much, if not all, activity involves active 'identity work' (Alvesson and Wilmott 2002). Students are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining or strengthening or revising these constructions. Specific events, encounters, transitions, experiences and surprises serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity and compel more concentrated identity work. The heightened awareness of self-identity resonates with some of the literature on culture shock and study abroad. Moving from the familiar into the unknown involves the adoption of new cultural, social and cognitive challenges (Prescott and Hellsten 2005). Within this context, self-identity is brought to the forefront. For example, mentoring schemes, which are transition programmes that are designed to enhance social integration, can act as a means of 'identity work', as can meetings with other students in semi-formal settings, library and information skills orientation designed to familiarise the student with the university, university accommodation policies aimed at integrating international students and so forth.

However, identity work which seeks to integrate the student into the host culture can be 'hampered by foreign language issues and alienation from one's social and cultural comfort zone (Prescott and Hellsten 2005). The poor fit between the international student's expectations and the cultural practices within the university can impact on their sense of self-identity: students may start to ask themselves, "Am I good enough?"

The students' self-concept during the transition process in a new culture and the effectiveness of teaching and learning as experienced by the student is well documented (Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Hellsten & Prescott 2002; Leask 2002, Violet & Ang 2000). Whilst Prescott and Hellsten acknowledge the 'reflexive' aspect of the international student experiences from the student perspective, it is not clear what

impact this has on the ongoing process of self-identity. This ongoing process may create a range of temporary identities for the individual.

International students experience cultural differences when they move from an educational setting which was familiar to them and where there was shared understanding of the language that was spoken, and what was expected of them. In the new culture, identity work can involve 'guesswork', where the individual may experience having to guess what the teacher is trying to get across in the lecture/seminar, or what is required of them to prepare for a seminar. Such an experience is clearly a source of anxiety, and can create self-doubt. Personal identity change, self-embarrassment and loss of confidence are all at stake in the new learning environment. In their research, Prescott and Hellsten (2005) found that, for some international students, this change was a less than amicable transition. Conscious 'identity work' thus involves at least a minimal amount of self-doubt and openness.

Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) suggest that such tensions are stopped, or at least suspended, when receptiveness to identity-securing positions and routines is matched by those in the organization or organizational practices who share the perception, although this may be subject to disruption. Questions of who I am and how I want to be seen are usually a continuous and on-going project of the self, where the self becomes the focus of attention by the individual. For example becoming a high achieving student, developing cultural competencies individual whilst managing competing identities stemming from the ability to manage and survive the challenges of 'culture shock'. Self-identity can therefore be seen as a repertoire of structured narrations which is sustained through 'identity work' (Alvesson and Wilmott 2002).

Individuals, Narration and Identity

The narration of one's self-identity is believed to be constrained by the availability of discourses to the individual (Alvesson 2002; Taylor 2005). Individuals are not passive receptors or carriers of discourse, but instead they more or less actively and critically interpret and enact them (Wetherell and Potter 1972). In late modernity, the internationalisation of higher education has provided a biographical solution to the individual who studies abroad (Doherty and Singh 2005). Study abroad can be seen

as preparing a course for future actions mobilised in terms of the self-biography. We attempt to construct our lives as part of the project of creating our ongoing self-identity (Giddens 1991). Whilst education can be seen as a source of 'identity work', Doherty and Singh (2005) found that there was a wide variety of responses from international students which did not offer a homogenous narrative of the internationalisation of higher education, nor a homogeneous account of their own experiences. This would suggest that further qualitative research which focuses on the individual's experience of study abroad is required to highlight the complexity and diversity of international student identity.

Establishing an identity for oneself involves successful positioning, but such authentication is only achieved within particular interactions – thus there appears to be a rather temporary aspect to identity construction. As Karreman and Alvesson put it: "a person's social identity is something to be continuously worked on" (Karreman and Alvesson, 2001:65) and should be regarded as an accomplishment, rather than as an attribute. Identity work can therefore involve the placing of the self and others into positions made available within wider discourses of the Internationalisation of higher education. This idea of 'positioning' draws on the conceptualisation of identity presented by Davies and Harré. "An individual emerges through the process of social interaction ….who one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices" (Davies and Harré, 1991:46).

The discursive aspect of identity is an important development within the Internationalisation of higher education literature; it enables the exploration of the active nature of students in the narration of their own identity work and how they position themselves in their own 'talk'. We have seen attempts to open up the notion of identity from that of homogeneous groups to that of identity constructions in competing discourses around the Internationalisation of higher education. Agency is highlighted where students' own stories illustrate identity positions within international higher education discourses, or where they resist them.

Doherty and Singh (2005) found that individuals had their own different and particular transnational educational history, and the individuals revealed an extremely varied

account of how they were using their education in the host culture to elaborate their pre-formed identities as transnational workers, global/national/local citizens and world learners. Doherty and Singh's findings support the view that international students act as agents shaping their own life trajectories and life narratives, and where education is seen as a means of preparing young people to live and function in a globally interdependent world. The sequential nature of identity often portrayed within educational settings and discourses of graduate employability oversimplifies the complexity of identity work, and the nuances that may occur. A crisis of self-identity may occur. Questions of "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?" become intertwined in one's identity work, which acts as a biographic self-project.

The active 'identity work' of international students may involve negotiating a new identity in terms of an open-mindedness towards the new culture, as well as language proficiency (in the target language). Troubles with language, housing, transportation, food, recreation and health can drain away a person's ability to make light of their identity work, and they may regress back to previous and more familiar identities.

In order to manage stress, anxiety or self-doubt, students may resort to patterns of interaction which are noticeable, for example retreating to the companionship of native speakers or, if this is not an option, seeking solace from other international students who may understand how you are feeling. The latter view is not universally held; Twombly's (1995) research on study abroad American students in Costa Rica witnessed many of the students turning their stay in Costa Rica into an 'American affair', only spending time with their own compatriots. This was a deliberate move towards isolation and away from local people and activities. The students wanted to experience Costa Rica with people similar to themselves, and did not extend their identity work further than their own reference group. The emergence of such deliberate 'identity work' needs to be acknowledged, even though it may represent a resistance to new 'identity work' and wider discourses embedded in the internationalisation of higher education. It can be seen as striving towards 'ontological security' by resorting to a more familiar sense of national identity.

In this sense, 'intercultural identity', which is often incorporated within the discourse of internationalisation, is somewhat complex and is not necessarily an outcome of study

abroad. A more individualised account of how an 'individual negotiates their intercultural identity' stands in contrast to the idea of an individual who experiences integration into the new environment and where they may grow beyond their original culture, encompass a new culture and thereby gain insights into both cultures in the process. A discursive approach to the experiences of international students would enable the individual to narrate their own socio-cultural adjustment sand expose the complexities involved. For example, some individuals may fight or grope their way towards a new intercultural identity, or others may maintain a combination of their old and new cultural identities within their view of themselves. Internationalized higher education therefore needs to be understood as something that is constituted by the self, albeit socially mediated, and that the identity of international students needs to embrace the agency of students. In addition, identity needs to be understood as a narrative, which is an on-going process (Alvesson 1994; Czarniawska-Joerges 1996; Giddens 1991), and moves beyond the convenient stereotype of international students.

Research into the 'identity work' of international students may therefore act as a catalyst for challenging the prevalence of lecturers' stereotypical views of international students as passive, obedient learners, lacking in autonomy, who memorise and are unfamiliar with UK academic culture and are therefore academically 'deficient' (De Vita, 2004; Hills and Thom, 2005; Kingston and Forland, 2004). It should be recognised that this is an exceptionally narrow view, and does little to acknowledge the identity work of international students and their resourcefulness in the new culture.

The Internationalisation of higher education is a site of identity construction and active identity work. Attempts to introduce complexity and ambiguity have been "hampered by a definition based on durability, convergence and unity" (Maguire and Hardy (2005:15). The notion of 'identity work' challenges the idea of strong, convergent identities, where international students are portrayed within a limited number of identity positions, sharing similar characteristics and experiences. This notion asserts instead that identities are multiple, fragmented and contradictory. For example, we can pose questions that simultaneously embrace the complexity of both assimilation and marginalization of international student subjects who desire modernity, but who also experience exclusion and alienation within their own identity work.

Overview

The internationalisation of higher education literature is embedded with discourses of globalisation, with particular emphasis on human capital theory; such discourses bestow identities on university students as rationalist thinkers who eagerly embrace neo-liberal policies of marketization and commodification. If we conceive of these discourses in terms of 'identity work', then the identity work of students is often seen as unproblematic. Students are often positioned within such discourses as successful transnational workers within the global marketplace. Such globalised accounts operate at the macro level and suggest universal identities which often overshadow the more localised micro-processual aspects of globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education that students experience. This can result in the removal of individual "agency", with little recognition of the person's own will and determination (Madge et al 2009), and the range of identities that students can negotiate. By adopting the notion of 'identity work' as developed by Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) in this thesis we can acknowledge how international students position themselves within social interactions, and the identity work they undertake. University practices often result in a melting pot of student identities from European and non-European countries being referred to as international students (a convenient stereotype).

The motivation for 'identity work' is evident as students are under constant pressure to develop international competencies and intercultural sensitivities in preparation for work in an international context. This has meant that higher education has become a site of identity construction for both university staff and students (Barry, Berg and Chandler, 2006; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Garcia and Hardy 2007; Ball 2003 in Ninnes & Hellsten 2005). Study abroad allows individuals to fashion their own identities in the stories that they tell about themselves (Ainsworth & Hardy 2004). As human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through our experiences (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008).

Meeting the challenges of current research

A focus on the individual is arguably important within the internationalisation of higher education (Sanderson 2008; Montgomery 2010; Gu and Schweisfurth 2015). A failure

to acknowledge the individual's motivations and experiences can contribute to a treatment of international students as a homogeneous group.

This has guided some researchers to focus on the individual and utilise a variety of data collection methods. These range from biographies to narrative inquiry, which represents a contemporary approach within the literature. These approaches offer a constructivist paradigm where identity is conceptualised as dynamic and temporary in a range of the social interactions that international students experience with others. This approach thereby abandons the search for a universal explanation, and focuses more on the micro level of lived experiences, and subsequently how these impact on the individual's sense of identity.

Such an approach aims to provide rich and detailed accounts of the international student experience ((Trahar 2009; Choubey 2007; Singh 2005 and Ahem 2008)). For example, Choubey (2007) wrote a biography of an Indian student, who lived and worked in Australia for two years. This allowed the individual student to be re-positioned as 'a storyteller' of their own experiences abroad (Singh 2005). Individual motivations, experiences and decisions emerged from the student in a natural setting. Moore (2008) used the stories of three former international students, to examine their experiences whereas, Ahem (2008) used stories from twelve students and four teachers collected through interviews, and used these to create two narratives constructed after the interviews had taken place.

There are a number of reasons for extending the current literature on international students' experiences. Firstly, international student experiences are well documented within the literature, but a focus on the diversity of such experiences is limited. Secondly, less attention has been afforded to what impact these experiences have on international student identity. Reframing the current research in terms of how students talk about themselves and how they take up different identity positions in their own talk will generate a less generalized account of international student identity. Finally, such an approach will elicit a more dynamic account of the "internationalisation of higher education" as experienced by the international student.

This thesis seeks to draw attention to the conceptualisation of 'identity work' of international students (as discussed earlier) as an important dimension of the

internationalisation of higher education. ‘Identity work’ provides an important link between the process of the internationalisation of higher education and the individual. It creates an opportunity to explore how the social interactions that the student experiences, impacts on their sense of identity. It incorporates the view that an individual can exercise agency and that students do not have to accept impoverished views of them-selves whilst battling with a number of social and cultural challenges.

This has led the researcher to formulate the following research questions:

Research Questions

What is international student identity? Does it change over time? If so, how?

Subsidiary Questions

Where is international student identity constructed?

What are the key factors that have contributed to international students’ identity changes over time?

Summary

The literature review was organised and presented using three key areas which include: the nature of internationalisation in higher education, the literature on overseas students and the literature on international student identity.

The literature suggests that Internationalisation is firmly on the UK education agenda. Various authors have pointed out that the internalization of higher education is neither a neutral nor a historical process, and that attempts should be made to highlight the nuances and localities of Internationalisation. Academic culture, language, world region and home nation all play a part in how Internationalisation is experienced or developed further. In this sense, the literature on the Internationalisation of higher education can thus appear narrow in focus, moving little beyond its economic focus.

Secondly, the review of the literature has highlighted the range of problems that international students experience during their study abroad.

Finally, the literature review suggests that the ‘identity work’ of international students is an important and yet still insufficiently explored dimension of the Internationalisation of higher education, which may inform future research and professional practice.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter considers the conceptual frameworks, epistemological issues and matters relating to positivism and interpretivism as the two paradigms that underpin qualitative and quantitative methodologies respectively. A rationale is provided for the methodological approach adopted. The chapter also considers the most appropriate methods to be used, given the methodological approach chosen. The main and subsidiary questions guiding this research are restated at the beginning of this chapter to demonstrate that the methodology and methods chosen are in line with the research project.

The methodology adopted is qualitative. The rationale for adopting a qualitative research methodology is discussed later. A more detailed discussion of the research design including: choice of methods and techniques, location of the study, selection of research participants, ethical considerations, data collection, reflexivity and analysis is provided.

Main Research Question

What is international student identity? Does it change over time? If so, how?

Subsidiary questions

Where is international student identity constructed?

What are the key factors that contribute to international students' identity change over time?

The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is based on the assumption that identity is shaped through the social interactions that individuals experience. This provides an alternative approach to the positivist practice of treating international students as a homogeneous group, and this approach challenges the use of such stereotypes. This study regards the internationalisation of higher education as constituting of more than the mere presence of international students on UK campuses. The study abroad is an opportunity where international students can explore in-depth their own experiences of studying abroad and construct their own personal identity beyond, or within, that of the 'international student'.

By comparing a naturalist approach with that of the constructivist, Gubrium and Hollstein (1997) state that the former seeks rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their natural habitats, whereas the latter contrastingly focuses on how participants create a sense a social order or meaning through talk and interaction. It is through talk and interaction that individuals can engage in ongoing identity construction known as 'identity work' (Alvesson et al 2008). Identity work is not undertaken in a vacuum but is undertaken dialogically in contexts with other people, within organisations and in society (McKenna 2010). Identity work can be triggered by uncertainty, anxiety or situation/events which cause self-doubt, such as the situations that international students may encounter when living and studying abroad. For example, within the stereotype of 'international student', an individual may construct an identity of an active networker, where they may establish a 'survival network', where the main purpose is 'getting by' (Robinson 2005).

The conceptual framework used takes into consideration the three areas of identity work which are: individual, relational and organisational (Alvesson and Wilmott 2002; Jenkins 2004). The assumptions at the individual level are that culture shock, feelings of loneliness and personal safety issues, for example, can shape the personal identity of an individual. It is assumed in this study that the relational aspects of identity work can take the form of friends, family, home students and employment. By contrast, the organisational level of identity work can incorporate how the organisation (i.e. the university) supports the student through a transition programme, induction

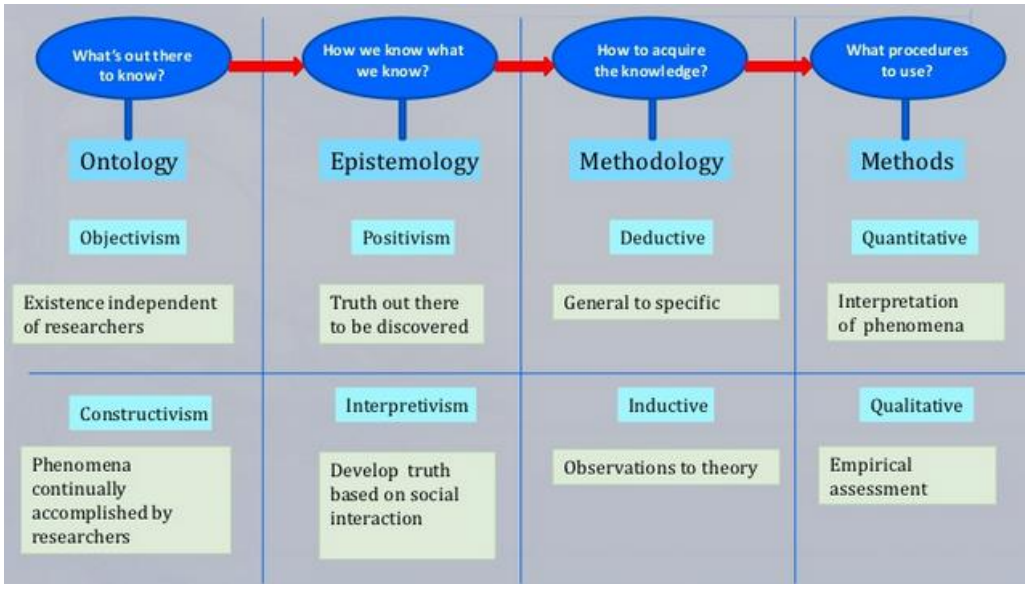
programme, the recruitment process and how they (the student) respond to academic culture shock. (UKCISA 2009; Montgomery 2010; Gu 2007; Block 2010; Ward 2001; Ryan 2005 and Lin & Yi, 1997).

The Ontological Paradigm and the Epistemological Underpinning

As an educational researcher concerned with notions of identity, it is necessary to investigate the philosophical foundations on which my research is developed. There is a necessity to clearly reflect upon your own ontological and epistemological perspectives and to reflect upon the ways in which these may inform the development of appropriate research paradigms (Cohen et al 2000; Bracken 2012).

Guba (1990) suggests that paradigms can be characterised through their: ontology (What is reality?), epistemology (How do you know something?) and methodology (How do go about finding out?). These characteristics create a holistic view of how we view knowledge: how we see ourselves in relation to this knowledge, and the methodological strategies we use.

Figure 3.1 depicts an overview of the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices the researcher is faced with.



Source: Maylor and Blackmon 2005:157

As a researcher I am interested in how participants create a sense of social order or meaning of their experiences during their study abroad. Gubrium and Hollstein (1997) describe this as ‘a constructivist ontology’, where the researcher conceptualises reality as being socially constructed. It follows that, by conceptualising reality in this way, multiple constructed realities can emerge and that these multiple realities will inevitably diverge. By its very nature, this research approach may raise more questions than it answers, so that so that prediction and control from the data are unlikely outcomes.

Epistemological considerations relate to how the researcher views their relationship, to the object of their research. On reviewing the epistemological differences between positivism and interpretivism (as shown in Figure 3.1) I understand that I hold an interpretivist belief, where the relationship of the researcher to that of the "object" of study is seen as interacting, the one influencing the other; and where the knower and known are inseparable. A discussion of my own beliefs about my relationship and influence to the object of study can be found in the discussion of the ‘reflexivity of the researcher’ later in this chapter.

The ontological and epistemological chosen for this research study mirror the beliefs that I hold and guided my decisions to adopt a qualitative approach to my research.

A further discussion of the differences between positivism and interpretivism which guided my research is provided in the following section.

Positivism and Interpretivism

The two predominant approaches within social sciences are those of positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences (Bryman and Bell 2006). The assumption behind the positivist approach is that there is an objective truth existing in the world that can be measured and explained scientifically. The main concerns of the quantitative paradigm, therefore, are that measurement is reliable, valid and generalizable (Cassell & Symon, 1994). Positivists see the role of research as consisting of testing theories and providing material to develop laws (Bryman and Bell 2006). Maylor and Blackmon (2005) describe positivism as ‘an idealised model to

arrive at what scientists consider to be the truth'. For example, quantitative research involves the counting and measuring of events, and performing statistical analysis of a body of numerical data to arrive at the truth (Smith 1988). Scientific hypotheses are therefore seen as value-free; the researcher's own values, biases and subjective preferences have no place in the quantitative approach. There has been a longstanding debate about the appropriateness of such an approach regarding the study of society (Bryman and Bell 2006).

Interpretivism is a term given to a contrasting epistemology to positivism. Interpretivism does not simply count things, but is a way of recording people's attitudes, feelings and behaviours in greater depth. 'Interpretivism is often associated with qualitative researchers who attempt to develop in-depth understandings of single cases or small samples, paying close attention to context, meaning and process' (Shulman, 1990:47). Critics of positivism argue that the subject matter of the social sciences - people and institutions – is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences (Bryman and Bell 2006). A comparison of the two approaches suggests that positivism attempts to explain human behaviour, whereas interpretivism focuses on an understanding of human behaviour (Von Wright 1971).

In summary, quantitative research rests upon positivist assumptions, while qualitative research rests upon the assumptions of interpretivism. Bryman and Bell (2007) compare the notions of qualitative and quantitative by using key words to differentiate the two approaches. The key words (Figure 3.1) chosen to describe qualitative research assisted me in developing an overview of the qualitative approach, which I then used to guide aspects of my research design regarding the experiences of international students.

I was aware from the contrast provided between quantitative and qualitative research in Table 3.1 that qualitative research would require me to acknowledge that I would be closer to the research and to the research participants. I have addressed this issue with a closer examination of the 'reflexive' aspect of my qualitative research, discussed later in this chapter. For example, by exploring my role as a teacher and researcher within the research study, I was able to examine how this role might affect my data collection and data interpretation. In line with a qualitative approach, I designed my

research so that theoretical elaboration emerges out of the data, as opposed to testing any theory or hypothesis. For example, I am interested in the experiences of Indian students, how they talk about those experiences and how those experiences allow us to explore aspects of their personal identity. Theory is therefore grounded in the data collected, and it emerges as a piece of art that is yet to be created, rather than a puzzle where the image is already known. The analysis of the data is therefore inductive.

Table 3.1: Some common contrasts between quantitative and qualitative research

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Point of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard reliable data	Rich deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial setting	Natural settings

Source: Bryman and Bell 2006:426

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a qualitative approach to social research?

A qualitative approach to research allows the researcher to explore individuals' perspectives, experience and feelings in more detail (Patton 1990; Bryman and Bell 2006; Maylor and Blackmon 2005). Van Maanen (1983) defines qualitative methods as 'an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, and not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world' (p9).

Advantages

●It increases your understanding of a particular issue

●It provides more depth and detail, and looks deeper than by merely analysing ranks and counts; it records attitudes, feelings and behaviours

●It can explore the meanings, thoughts and feelings that people ascribe to a particular situation in which they find themselves

●It can create openness: it encourages participants to expand on their responses, which may open up new topic areas not initially considered

●It can enable a detailed picture to be constructed about why people act in certain ways and their feelings about these actions

●It attempts to avoid pre-judgements: if used alongside quantitative data collection, it can explain why a particular response was given

Disadvantages:

●Usually fewer people studied: collection of qualitative data is generally more time-consuming than quantitative data collection; therefore, unless time, staff and budget allow it is generally necessary to use a smaller sample size

●Less easy to generalise: because fewer people are generally studied, it is not possible to generalise results to that of the entire population. Consequently, exact numbers are usually reported, rather than percentages

●Difficult to make systematic comparisons: for example, in the case that people provide widely-differing responses that are highly subjective

●Dependent on skills of the researcher: this is particularly the case when conducting interviews, focus groups and observation

●You can investigate your research problem from different perspectives: you can combine different qualitative methods, or combine quantitative and qualitative methods

Despite the stated disadvantages of qualitative research, this approach is nevertheless beneficial for my research study. A qualitative researcher does have a number of data collection options available to them. For example, in the case of participant observation, '…it allows researchers to submerge themselves in a social setting with a fairly general research focus in mind, and gradually to formulate a narrow emphasis by making as many observations of that setting as possible' (Bryman and Bell 2006:420).

Rationale for Qualitative Research

This research follows the qualitative approach and rests upon interpretivist assumptions. Qualitative research shares the theoretical assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication (Morgan, 1980).

A qualitative approach to the research offers an opportunity to explore the subjective experience of individuals, and it is able to recognise the complexity of what is researched, as well as the role of the researcher within the research. For example, qualitative researchers are concerned with attempting to accurately describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal social contexts (Fryer, 1991). Interpretivism provides a strategy that respects the differences between people and objects in the natural sciences. It therefore suits my research, as it requires me to grasp the subjective meaning of the experiences of international students living and studying abroad. Qualitative research focuses on increasing our understanding of a particular issue.

My research adopts a qualitative approach and raises questions about the experiences of Indian international students in a new Midlands university, and what

meanings, thoughts and feelings are ascribed to the situation in which they find themselves. A university, such as the one chosen for this study, is both a social system and the setting for social behaviour (Maylor and Blackmon 2005). Within this setting, students construct and maintain social systems, and therefore the research design needs to be different from that of the natural sciences. A qualitative research approach such as that used in this research encourages the researcher to emphasise their interpretation and their views, and to acknowledge their involvement in the research process. This issue is discussed subsequently in more detail in this chapter with regards to the reflexivity of the researcher.

Qualitative Research Methods

Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest that the term 'qualitative research' is a helpful and meaningful category to social scientists, but it can be viewed in a variety of different ways. Research methods which are often associated with qualitative research include: interviewing; ethnography or participant observation; focus groups and the collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents. Some researchers regard a mix of methods, such as combining participant observation with interviews, as being beneficial.

On reviewing participant observation as a possible data collection method for this research study, I felt that my data might be compromised, as the participant observations could only take place in a teaching setting such as the classroom or a study area such as the university library, due to the time commitments of the researcher. In these situations, students may revert to their native language, which I would not be able to comprehend. Furthermore, my research study required both that I access the experiences of the international students, and that they construct their own meanings with reference to the social situations that they had encountered.

Qualitative researchers tend to use semi-structured or unstructured interviews, which allow for the sensitizing of data, rather than defining concepts (Blumer 1954, cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:421). Even though group interviews (often referred to as focus groups) may also enable the researcher to sensitize the data, they would not be sufficiently adequate to explore the social constructions of each student in the

research study when reflecting on their year abroad. In particular, I was concerned about the extent to which the problem of 'group effect' may have. 'This includes the obvious problem of dealing with reticent speakers and with those who 'hog the stage' (Bryman and Bell 2006:527). Madriz (2000) suggests that 'there are circumstances when focus groups may not be appropriate, because of their potential for causing discomfort among participants' (Madriz 2000 cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:525). Thomas (2008) suggests that the researcher should question the extent to which the focus group is 'a private space in which the participant can freely express thoughts and behaviours' (p83).

Having considered the range of qualitative data collection methods available to me for the purpose of my research study, I decided upon the use of semi-structured interviews.

Types of interview

Interviews are probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research (Bryman and Bell 2006). Interviews have been used extensively for data collection across all the disciplines of the social sciences and in educational research (Berry 1999). Interviews can be categorised into four kinds: the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focused interview (Cohen & Manion (1994:273). Patton (1994) refers to these basic approaches to conducting interviews as ranging from: the interview as a chat; the interview as more guided and the interview as more standardised, and consequently the questions would be more carefully worded to minimise variation in the questions being asked.

Structured interviews are those that restrict the interview to a predetermined set of questions. Highly structured interviews therefore make use of closed questions, with a limited range of responses (Maylor and Blackmon 2005). These may be based on 'a carefully prepared set of questions piloted and refined until the researcher is convinced of their validity' (Easterby-Smith et al 1991:72). This type of interview usually requires the respondent to answer all of the questions asked. Semi-structured interviews also begin with some predetermined questions, but the interviewer is able to prompt further questions when they wish to pursue an answer further. Unstructured interviews usually

mean the interviewee is directed only to the general area for discussion, and more open questions are used to seek further clarity. Maylor and Blackmon (2005) suggest that an interview does not have to be entirely structured or unstructured.

It is worth noting that there are differences of approach amongst qualitative researchers who advocate semi-structured interviewing. The 'naturalist' approach, with its emphasis on rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their natural habitat, can be compared with the 'constructivist' approach, how a sense of social order is crafted through talk and interaction (Gubrium & Hollstein 1997). I adopt the latter approach, where the interviewees are able to craft their experiences of living and studying abroad through their talk and interaction in the interview situation. Researchers do use the naturalist or constructivist paradigm when conducting interviews (Gubrium and Hollstien 1997; Weiss 1994); however the constructivist approach to interviewing requires a much greater sensitivity to the interpretive procedures through which meanings are achieved within the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Harris, 2003).

Advantages of interviews:

●There are a variety of different types of interview available
●The interviewer is able to develop a rapport with the interviewee
●The interviewee is able to ask for clarification if they do not understand a question
●All questions will be attempted in a face-to-face interview
●Interviewers are able to acknowledge the 'interactional' aspect of the interview situation if they wish
●They can generate a lot of data
●The interviewer can explore the meanings attached to social phenomena
●Interviews can help develop an understanding of the respondent's world
●Useful when the step-by-step logic of a situation is not clear
●One-to-one interviews can create a more trusting environment for the interviewee (Easterby-Smith et al 1991).

Disadvantages of interviews:

●Take considerable amount of time to set up and conduct
●Often difficult to arrange
●Rely on the competence of the interviewer
●Yield data from relatively fewer people
● Interviews can result in masses of information
●Difficult to generalize findings (if unstructured/semi-structured)
●An hour-long interview may take 7-8 hours to transcribe
●There may be difficult power relations (between interviewer and interviewee), such as those relating to difference in gender, class and nationality
●Open questions may avoid bias, but they may put the interviewee ill at ease

The pilot study

Kim (2011) suggests that a pilot study can act as a means of reviewing the effectiveness of the proposed data collection method. The main aim of the pilot study in this research was to review the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews in getting Indian students to share their personal experiences of living and studying abroad with a member of staff. Several criteria was used to guide the suitability of this data collection method (van Teijingen et al 2001). This included the nature of responses to questions; frequency and use of probe questions; suitability of paraphrasing of participant's responses, length of interview and the perceived rapport between interviewer and interviewee.

In addition, the pilot study provided the opportunity for the researcher to self-evaluate one's readiness, capability, and commitment as a qualitative researcher working within a cross cultural context (Kim 2011). This is explored further in this chapter in terms of my own reflexivity and my relationship to the research and the participants

Practical considerations from the pilot study

As a result of the pilot study I chose a semi-structured interview method to collect my data for this research study. A semi-structured interview appears to be a useful method

of qualitative data collection. It is not highly structured, but does feature various topics and questions that the interviewer is interested in. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are useful where the interviewer wishes to explore the meanings that individuals place on social phenomena (see previous discussion on ontological and epistemological choices in Chapter Three). The pilot study suggested that the use of semi-structured interviews would enable me to explore the meanings that Indian students attach to their study abroad.

As a result of the pilot study several practical issues were furthered considered when planning the semi-structured interviews in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collected. As Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest, I used a rough question guide to manage the interview process. For example, prior to the pilot interview being conducted, I considered general topic areas or questions that I wanted to ask, and I was able to ask additional questions. Probing questions were shown to be a necessary part of the semi-structured interview where I wanted to obtain further information on a particular issue. A copy of the question guide for this research study can be found in Appendices D, E and F.

As suggested by Kim (2011) the pilot study also enhanced my own awareness as a culturally-sensitive researcher. In particular I aimed to allow sufficient space and time during future interviews for the interaction to occur between researcher and participant (Thomas 2008), so that the participants could provide their first-hand accounts of their student experience abroad through the pre-planned questions without feeling rushed.

The challenges of interviews and how to overcome them, is well documented (Bryman and Bell 2006; Maylor and Blackmon 2005; Easterby-Smith 1991). Firstly, before interviewing anybody, researchers should be fully conversant with the schedule (Bryman and Bell 2006). Secondly, where an interviewer is taking notes and asking mainly open-ended questions, they will need to summarise responses, then filter the data and decide what is important and what is not. ‘This requires the interviewer to be perceptive and sensitive to events so that lines of enquiry can be changed and adapted during the interview’ (Easterby-Smith 1991:76). The pilot study interview therefore acted as a review of my own interviewing skills.

Although interviewing is often claimed to be the best method of gathering information, its complexity can sometimes be underestimated' (Easterby-Smith et al 1991:72). For example, I duly considered taking of notes during the interview, and I did not assume that the audio recording would take the place of note taking. As a result of the pilot study I decided to take some notes as an aide memoire and focus on the audio recordings of the interviews as the main method of data collection. This would allow me to play back each interview during the transcription stage of the research. I chose the least obtrusive recording equipment available, which was a pocket-sized dicta-phone. Some adjustments were applied to the location of the dicta-phone in terms of the recording quality of the interview.

In the case of face-to-face interviews and group interviews, the interviewer also has to adapt to different roles; for example, in the former they need to act as initiator, and in the latter moderator skills are required (Easterby-Smith et al 1991). Further skills are particularly required where the interviewer is interested in exploring how individuals construct the meaning and significance of their situations. This may include sensitivity and sufficient skills on the part of the interviewer in order to ensure that the participant understands what the other person's view is. One particular adjustment that was made to the interview schedule was the opening of the interview and reminding the participants of my role as researcher in this particular context and not teacher. My use of 'paraphrasing' the participant's answer during the live interview, or by asking the participant further questions to gain a closer understanding of the participant's meaning was explored in the pilot study interview.

Further consideration was given to the time implications of the design and the period in which to conduct the interviews. It has been observed that, 'Relationships take time to form' (Easterby-Smith et al 1991:78), and I felt that it was preferable to undertake a series of short interviews through which a rapport could be established, rather than acting hastily and risking alienating the interviewees through several perhaps unwelcome questions. The pilot study interview enabled me to reach an approximate guide of the timing of the future interviews and I found it worthwhile talking to my participants about the research before I started asking any questions. I usually started with some conversation: easy questions to put the participant at ease. I ensured that I

was relaxed and organised about the interview, as interviewees can often pick up on anxiety very easily.

The research study was designed with a small number of participants in mind, which supported the use of semi-structured interviews. I was aware that consideration of the power relations should take place prior to and during the interview process (Liamputtong 2010). Although this issue could not be fully explored in the pilot study interview, I did feel that the rapport that I had developed with the Masters' students during the previous teaching semester could help me develop a relaxed atmosphere in the interviews.

I was aware from the pilot study that despite signing the informed consent letter, some participants may still not have been aware of the purpose of the research was. The pilot study interview therefore made be more aware of the related ethical issues that could arise in future interviews.

Further practical considerations of using interviews to collect data

In consideration of some of the limitations of interviewing, I planned to conduct the interviews at a time of the academic year where there was little teaching of formal classes for both myself and the students involved in the research study. This enabled me to identify several months during which the initial interviews could be conducted, and where the data collection stage could take priority over everything else. To conduct interviews during term time would mean conducting them during unsocial hours, which would involve further ethical considerations as well as time constraints for the participants and the researcher.

During the initial data collection phases, further consideration was given to the time required for the transcription of the interviews. I completed the transcriptions in handwritten format on train journeys between home and the university shortly after each interview took place. The masses of information collected during the interviews were collated for each individual student, and I personally transcribed the interview material from the interview recordings, typing them up at a later stage. Firstly, this assisted me in constructing a more faithful account of the interview itself and helped

me prepare for the follow-up interview. Secondly, this helped me to record the respective student experiences accurately and take account of the diversity between the participants' experiences.

Beauty was invited to participate in the research when she approached me to say hello at a new midlands university where she studied. I explained the nature of the research and what was required from a participant. She then approached other students as part of a snowball sample and asked them to participate in the research project. The first and second stage of data collection commenced in July of 2011 and August 2011 respectively and students were invited to attend a further interview six months later. Interviews were arranged at the convenience of the student, as they were still attending formal classes as part of their second semester. Participants were all from the same cohort of Masters' students who had been enrolled at the Business School in January 2011. All interviews were held in the Business and Law building at a new midlands university, and a member of the programme administration team was notified that the interviews were taking place in a designated seminar room.

Location of the research

My research was undertaken at a new university in the Midlands region of England. The Business School occupies a central campus location close to the city, which is surrounded by student accommodation, private accommodation, central university services and the local high street. The Business School currently has the largest number of international students enrolled on postgraduate programmes. In 2010 the new midlands university launched its international office and saw the appointment of a Director of International Recruitment. The majority of international students recruited are enrolled on taught full-time Masters' programmes, which is typically of twelve months duration.

Permission to conduct the research was approved by the University of Nottingham Ethics Committee and subsequently by a new midlands university Faculty Research Ethics Committee which is a requirement for all staff and students undertaking

research there. A copy of the respective ethics forms required for this research can be found in Appendix C.

Approval of the research was obtained in June of 2011 and interviews were scheduled over three phases.

First phase: July 2011

This phase involved individual interviews with seven overseas students from India from the January cohort of Masters' students. Informed consent was gained from each student and students were also asked to sign both copies of the ethics form which detailed the purpose of my research and the ethical duties that I was required to undertake. I was able to access students by using a snowball sample which will be discussed later in the chapter. In the first interview I used a six month period in which students were asked to talk about their experiences of arriving in England. I found it useful to use a 'calendar' to act as a prompt for students to focus on the six month period prior to the interview and to locate feelings, emotions and experiences within that six month time period. No biographic data was directly elicited at this time.

Second phase August 2011

I developed the investigation further by exploring the students' experience of living and studying at a new midlands university by conducting a second phase interview. The interviews had a dual purpose: to explore topics that had already been discussed in the first interview in a more in-depth way and to clarify my understanding of the students' responses. The second phase interview also created an opportunity to explore the relational aspect of their study abroad, with particular focus on their parents' expectations, the previous or educational achievements of their siblings and so forth. I found that in-depth interviewing was a very good method in eliciting data from the students. I also made several useful discoveries from this 'hands on' experience. First, that the students had a very good mental account of what they had said in the first interview. It was useful to start the interview with a topic from the previous interview as the students felt more comfortable with that. I would use

something related to their first experience in the UK or at a new midlands university, or a specific quote from the interview transcript which acted as a good means of starting the interview and developing a further rapport with the student. It was during the second phase of the research that the students appeared more comfortable to talk about their personal lives in terms of their parents and siblings.

Interviews did not tend to be held after a long day of study in the classroom and this appeared to help students focus better on the interview process. While arranging interviews with the participants, things such as their timetable, everyday routines, extra-curricular activities, commuting distances, and employment commitments were taken into consideration.

Third phase March 2012

This phase proved to be more challenging in terms of arranging the interviews and I needed to allow for a wider period of data collection to allow for variation in the different locations students were residing. The third stage of the research coincided with the students writing up and completing their dissertations and prior to their application for Post Study Work Visas. One student had already left the new midlands university and was living elsewhere in the UK. They were in paid employment and writing their dissertation on a part-time basis. Others remained in close proximity to the new midlands university or within commuting distance and were seeking paid employment, or had since achieved paid employment and were completing their studies. One student had returned to India prior to Christmas and planned not to return until February 2012 and intended to submit their dissertation on-line. All students in the research were required to submit a Masters' dissertation during mid-January 2012, on successful completion of their Diploma stage of their Masters' degree. Students were not required to attend any other classes during the period September 2011 to January 2012, but were required to meet or email their dissertation supervisor.

During these interviews, questions encouraged students to explore the past six months from August 2011 to January 2012. It was intended to incorporate an interview following the students' application for Post Study Visa, but I felt that interviews may be difficult to arrange and commitment to the research project may vary as students may

need to plan their return journey home very quickly if their visa application was unsuccessful. The purpose of the third phase of the interviews was to explore personal experiences of living and studying at the new midlands university, particularly as many of the students were now in the dissertation stage of their degree and some students had indicated in their previous interview that they would be relocating during this stage. The third phase of interviews would also supplement the previous interviews to gain a more in-depth view of the students' experiences.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

In order to access the participants in this study I used a snowball sampling technique within the masters in business cohort at the university. In snowball sampling, the researcher begins by identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study (Patton 1990; Fife-Schaw 1995; Lyons 2000; Minchiello et al 1992; Denzin, 1970). The researcher asks them to recommend others who they know will meet the criteria. For example in this research study it was important that participants were selected from the January cohort of the Masters' programme. Participants had to be Indian international students who had lived and studied in this new midlands university for approximately six months prior to the first research interview they undertook. Due to the significant number of Indian students in this particular cohort it was hoped that both Indian males and females would be included in the snowball sample. Snowball sampling is especially useful when you are trying to reach populations that are inaccessible or hard to find. This particular type of sampling is sometimes used where participants are difficult to access or hard to find (Maylor and Blackmon 2005). Although there are limitations to a snowball sample such as the nature of similarity within social networks may mean that 'isolates' are ignored the limitations do outweigh the benefits (Atkinson and Flint 2001), as I hoped that by using this technique students would volunteer to take part in the research if invited by peers rather than a member of the teaching staff and that their participation wold be voluntary.

I had met Beauty on a number of occasions at the university and she was a former student of mine and the first student I shared my research interests with. She approached me one day and asked how I planned to spend my time during the

summer months as she was aware that formal teaching had ceased for many of the undergraduate students. I informed her that I was planning some research and gave her a brief overview of the research study I was working on. I mentioned that I was looking for students to take part but did not want to contact students directly. Beauty offered to help me find further participants. It is important to mention that my teaching commitments had at this time finished for all students including Beauty and her peers. All assessment marks had been submitted to the examination board prior to the selection of participants. Furthermore, the snowball type sampling suited the needs of the research, as it is not the intention of the researcher to draw conclusions beyond the sample chosen.

Table 3.2: Demographics of participants

Female 1	Jaipur	MBA Business
Female 2	Kochi	MBA Business
Female 3	Delhi	MBA Business
Male 1	Agra	MBA Business
Male 2	Agra	MBA Business
Male 3	Chennai	MBA Business
Male 4	Delhi	MBA Business

Reflexivity of the Researcher

Watt (2007) suggests that qualitative researchers should be proactive in the process of reflection during their research. Unlike scientific research which interprets 'ambiguities, conflicts and unforeseen difficulties' 'as deficiencies arising from insufficient preparation, knowledge and experience' (Walford, 1991:3), a 'reflexive' approach recognises the relevance of the human dimension involved in educational research. There is an assumption within qualitative research that the researcher carries with them ‘cultural baggage, personal idiosyncrasies, and implicit assumptions about the nature of reality’ (Bryman and Bell 2006:712). In brief this can be referred to

as having a conversation with oneself (Woolgar 1988). The researcher is not seen as someone who is extracting knowledge from observations and conversations with others and then shares that knowledge with others (Bryman and Bell 2006). The researcher is seen instead as 'implicit in the construction of knowledge through the stance that he or she assumes in relation to that which is observed and transmitted' (Bryman and Bell 2006:712). What is sometimes seen as sanitized accounts of research is therefore removed, and these researchers are able to explore how their biases and characteristics affect the research process (Bryman and Bell 2006).

The nature of my own qualitative research has meant that a small number of international students were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. These students were selected from a cohort of the full-time Masters' programme at a new midlands university where I teach. Consideration was given to drawing the sample from outside of the faculty that I work in but the Business School has the largest number of international students within the university, and this meant that the recruitment of participants was made easier as I had direct access to postgraduate students on business courses. In addition, as a member of the postgraduate teaching team I was familiar with the recruitment, assessment and design of the MBA programme. Watt (2007) suggests that the researcher should reflect on their own subjectivity in terms of how this may impact on the data collection and at a later stage the data interpretation.

I had taught on the full-time Masters' programme within the Business School for fifteen years. As previously mentioned I had previously taught the participants who volunteered to be part of this research study. I had taught this particular cohort of students previously, on a weekly basis during formal classes for two hours a week, 7 months prior to the start of the data collection. I recognised that I possessed dual roles as researcher and teacher whilst conducting this research (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). I therefore possess some knowledge of the university where the participants are studying, and some knowledge of the participants. This can be referred to as 'pre-understanding' (Coghlan 2005). I may therefore be regarded as an 'insider researcher' from an organisational perspective (Ferguson and Ferguson 2001 cited in Coghlan and Brannick 2005:62). However, there can be drawbacks to this as the 'insider researcher' can believe that they fully understand their own contexts, when

in fact their understanding is only partial. In the case of my research study, the research was based on students within an organisation where I am employed, but I realise that I did not possess full understanding of the experiences of living and studying as an Indian student abroad. The research study was designed using semi-structured interviews so that participants could be questioned further and probed on their experiences of studying and living abroad. As an 'insider-researcher' there are a number of positive aspects to this role, such as credibility, accessibility, trustworthiness, commitment, and familiarity with the organisation (Gorinski and Ferguson 1997 cited in Coghlan and Brannick 2005:63).

To reinforce my role as an 'insider researcher' and not simply as an academic tutor who had previously taught these students, participants were only selected once all students had submitted coursework for my module. The module assessment had been marked and returned to students 3 months prior to the first phase of the study being conducted. The participants knew me on a first name basis although some students still addressed me as 'mam' but the majority called me by my first name, or both. However, due to my own exposure as a tutor to students from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and their previous educational experiences, I was aware that students may still possess views of academic tutors as occupying a position of 'power and status'. I also recognise that those particular values about the role of the teacher are culturally bound as suggested by Handal and Lauvas (1987) and reinforced by Scudamore in 2013 in a HEA guide for new lecturers, entitled 'Engaging Home and International Students'. This particular issue was addressed as far as possible in the selection of the small number of students, the timing of the research, the nature of the research and the rapport developed prior to the research and through the whole research process (Liamputtong 2010; Thomas 2008).

In terms of my own subjectivity and reflexivity, the dual nature of my role as a member of academic staff and doctoral researcher needed to be explored. In one respect I might be regarded as an insider-researcher, in that I was conducting research within my own organisation (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). The researcher in this situation possesses valuable knowledge about the cultures and informal structures of the organisation. However, although I was an 'insider-researcher' in terms of the organisation I was an 'outsider-researcher' (Thomas 2008) in terms of the international

student experiences of living and studying abroad as well as lacking in-depth knowledge of the cultural group which took part in the research. I believe therefore that I was not too close to the data and was able to maintain a position where I reflected on my pre-understanding of the organisation. A means of addressing this particular issue is through the journaling of thoughts which '…is an important mechanism for learning to reflect on your insider-outsider position' (Coghlan and Brannick 2005:63), as well as the 'outsider researcher. The researcher used this more on an ad hoc basis prior to and after the data collection.

It is probably idealistic to think that the power differences between interviewer and interviewee, or in this case teacher and student, can be totally eliminated. Choi (2006) suggests this is difficult to reconcile, as the two roles are conflicting. She reports on difficulties experienced in interviewing her respondents in what she had regarded as a natural setting. She reports that she was perceived by students as "Other" and her negotiated entry (as a teacher) into the natural setting prevented her from accessing participants as a another identity. In my own research I believe that my negotiation into the interview setting as a researcher was achieved by postponing the data collection until after all classes that I had been involved in with had finished. If the data collection had been conducted alongside classroom situations that myself and these participants were involved in, I would have been unable to achieve a more prominent research role. During the second interview for example the students became more relaxed and engaged very quickly with the interview process and gave their own personal accounts of their experiences as international students and personal details about their parents and siblings. However, on one occasion when referring to a situation of racial harassment a student did ask me 'is it okay to tell you this? It would seem that I may have been perceived by this student as an employee of the university, more so than a researcher collecting data.

When establishing the researcher/interviewee relationship, it is important to the moral ground (Minichiello et al 1992: 240).The students were provided with accurate information including the aims and goals of the research, how the interview will be stored, my plans for the data that is collected and how it will be used, and that the student can withdraw at any time of the research. This was in guidance with the University of Nottingham ethics procedure, and signed copies of the consent form

were completed prior to the data collection stage. Each student was given their own signed copy of the consent form and the researcher stored a copy. Students were reassured of their anonymity and reminded once again that the data collected was for the purpose of doctoral research and would not be shared with other members of academic staff.

The different effects of different types of values and interests that the researcher has on the research should be discussed (Greenbank 2003:798). For example career aspirations. In terms of my own career aspirations, I have chosen to research the experiences of international students when living and studying abroad, because I am increasingly teaching MBA classes of up to 90% international students with very few English students. As a member of academic staff I also have the pressure to publish, and maintain scholarly activity in my own specialised discipline of organisational theory. The professional doctorate allowed me to further by professional development and substantiate a research area at doctorate level.

Despite having spent a short period of time abroad teaching Masters' students, I experienced very little insight into the education systems in China, Zambia and Ukraine. The Masters' students at that time were taught one module every three weeks, and a member of staff would deliver the module over a period of seven days. Teaching staff were not accompanied by colleagues when teaching abroad, and teaching commitments made it very difficult to access local culture in a meaningful way. As a white English speaker, female teacher, I have generated a number of biases, which are reflected in the professional, cultural and personal filters through which I approached each setting. Similarly, my interviewees' perceptions of me in the role of a female researcher and teacher were likely to influence their attitude towards me and consequently affected the quantity and quality of data generated. The extremely courteous manner in which they addressed me was difficult to decipher in terms of whether it reflected my own role as female, as researcher, as member of staff, in an unfamiliar setting of a one to one interview situation with each student for the first time in seven months.

My personal background and experience I had acquired prior to the research, in terms of the linguistic, cultural and professional knowledge and understanding required to

gain direct access to the Indian students, was limited. It could therefore be argued that I was approaching the research question from a mono-cultural perspective. However, I was not complacent in assuming that my personal background and experience could not guarantee the absence of bias and that the collection and interpretation of data would not be unaffected by my own pre-conceived ideas and opinions I had developed through my experiences in UK educational settings. In order to minimise the influence of my bias on the research process and enhance the validity of findings I adopted the following strategies.

By allowing additional data to emerge, the interview was not exclusively determined by the researcher's conceptual framework. The interview process for example allowed opportunities for the interviewee to express themselves freely on topics such as financial hardships, personal hardships, experiences of the university and so on. It seemed that the interviewees used the interview to reflect on their own experiences as an international student at the new midlands university. On completion of some of the first and second phase interviews I was surprised at the financial hardships that students had endured on arriving in the UK, and the personal obligations they had to their own family who had invested their savings to fund the educational experience abroad. I was equally surprised by their arrival at a new midlands university in some cases with no accommodation previously arranged. This certainly encouraged me to personally find out more about the university procedures for inducting new students and supporting them.

As bias manifests itself in the interaction of individual respondents, it can equally be created as a result of 'over-identification' on the part of the researcher. In my research I was fully aware of the different relationships that existed between me and my students, where one of the female students had seen me on a train and approached me to sit with her and her friends and invited me to lunch. Another female student was finding it difficult to find part-time work and after the interview had concluded we did have further communication about this issue, and a discussion on gaining relevant experience in a voluntary role, and later approached me to look at her cv. Jones (2001) suggests that the researcher needs to reflect on the personal and professional biases through the research process. However, I was aware of my own biases, which were complicated further by the individual relationships I had developed with my students

during the course of their interviews and the often private, confidential information I had acquired about them.

In this context a 'reflexive' account of the research process can provide a detailed description of the constraints imposed on the entire research process and to what extent this can affect the validity of data (Jones 2001). For example the researcher does have power to exert control over the nature and extent of the data collection process and furthermore in the researcher's interpretation of the data (Halpin and Troyna 1994). A 'reflexive' research account can play an important role in revealing power relations and their respective influence on the process of gaining access to qualitative interview data (Jones 2001). In contrast some theorists question whether a research biography alone can strengthen the credibility of the methodology or enhance the rigour of the research (Troyna 1994 in Jones, 2001). I believe that a reflexive account can assist in revealing the values, interests and motives of the researcher as they manage the research process through to the interpretation of results.

A copy of the interview questions and the interview transcripts evidence the flow of the interview process, whereas a biographic account of the researcher helps the reader understand in part the role of the researcher. Participants in the research were invited to comment on the interview transcripts once they had been compiled in terms of accuracy, points of clarification and aspects of the researcher's interpretation of the student's account.

Reflexivity of the researcher can also include the researcher's own thoughts of their own performance as an interviewer when reviewing the interview data. On reflection I listened to each recording several times during the transcribing of the interviews. I became self-conscious of the tone of my voice whether it appeared too authoritative or too assertive, or in some interviews where I appear fatigued. I was able to respond to these issues in later interviews of the data collection process, I made a conscious attempt to interview no more than two students a day, so I could focus on the interview process more closely. I also reviewed whether or not I had given adequate time to the student to fully answer the questions, and whether my prompt questions were effective in the earlier interviews. I therefore reviewed the interview recordings to identify whether or not I had listened to what the student was telling me and whether I followed

this up with further questions. I was personally aware of the need for careful listening and personal reflection throughout the interview process prior to the data collection (Dennis and Giangrevo 1996).

Liamputtong (2010) suggests that, when dealing with interaction between interviewer and interviewee from different cultural backgrounds, cultural sensitivity is required on the part of the researcher. Researchers need to exhibit cultural sensitivity through knowing key values for example, the role of cultural values regarding the individual in relation to the family, wider community relations, religion and employment and so on. Such cultural sensitivity requires an in-depth and accurate understanding of the cultural groups. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I would not describe myself as having in-depth knowledge of the cultural group within the research study, but as a qualitative researcher of cross-cultural issues I feel that I had attained some cultural sensitivity through knowledge gained through cross-cultural training, as suggested by Liamputtong (2010). I gained this through my role as a module co-ordinator of a cross-cultural module at undergraduate level, a course which I had personally designed and developed over a ten-year period, with a diverse student cohort. This enabled me to know that cultural differences as well as similarities exist, but without assigning any values (better/worse) to those cultural differences.

Data Analysis and interpretations

This research uses qualitative content analysis; Hsieh and Shannon observe that: 'The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study' (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1278).

Content analysis is often characterized as being both systematic and objective. There are generally rules for the researcher to follow, and the researcher is expected to act in such a way that these rules are applied consistently (Bryman and Bell 2006). Content analysis can be used in both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research.

Qualitative content analysis is defined as '…a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1278). Open-ended questions, interviews, focus groups or observations all lend themselves to the use of content analysis (Weber 1990, cited in Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1277). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) discuss three approaches to qualitative content analysis, each of which can be used by the researcher to interpret meaning from the content of the data. The choice of approach to content analysis is largely determined by the purpose of the research. First, the conventional approach to content analysis may be used where existing theory or research is limited. Categories are allowed to flow from the interpretation of the data. This approach to content analysis is largely inductive; the researcher tends to avoid preconceived categories. Data is read numerous times by the researcher and key words are subsequently highlighted, which helps towards the construction of different categories.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) advise that we should not confuse conventional approaches to content analysis with that of grounded theory. These authors argue that a conventional approach 'is more limited in both theory development and description of the lived experience…' (p1281). Conversely, summative content analysis '… goes beyond mere word counts to include latent analysis' (p1283). Word frequency is important, but in this approach researchers try to explore the different meanings attached to a word. The third approach to qualitative content analysis is referred to as 'directed content analysis'. This approach tends to be more structured than the conventional approach discussed earlier. It can be regarded as more deductive, as it takes existing theory or prior research as a means by which to guide the new research.

The directed approach to content analysis is selected here as an appropriate method of analysing the data collected in this research study, which originates from semi-structured interviews with international students living and studying in a new Midlands university in the UK. I began by identifying key concepts as initial coding categories. Operational definitions for each category were determined using existing theory. For example, Alvesson and Wilmott (2002), identified three levels of an individual's identity work, which include individual, relational and organisational. In this research study, for example, the relational aspects of identity work may include how identity is constructed

through relationships with friends, family members or even students with whom they may share accommodation. Organisational aspects of identity work, on the other hand, may refer to identity construction through transition and induction programmes, tutor support or supervision or even academic culture. As interviews were primarily the main source of data collection, using open-ended questions, I then followed these up with targeted questions about the predetermined categories. For example, in the initial interviews, by asking students to describe their experiences in the first six months of studying and living in the UK, I was able to ask additional questions about how they were feeling, and probe further as to what it meant to them personally to study and live in the UK. As regards coding, this can begin immediately, and data that cannot be coded can be analysed later to determine whether they represent a new category (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The previous theory on identity work was used to guide the discussion of my findings. 'Newly identified categories can either be used to offer a contradictory view of the phenomenon, or might further refine, extend or enrich the theory' (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1283).

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Validity and reliability possess connotations of measurement which may not be appropriate for the qualitative researcher Bryman and Bell (2005). It is therefore necessary to specify this, and to discuss ways of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln 1985 cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:411). They suggest that the qualitative researcher should be concerned with both 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity', and attempt to incorporate these into the research process. For example, trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Authenticity, however, is more concerned with the wider impact of the research study.

In addressing the credibility of the research project, the researcher needs to identify and describe the subjects involved in the research. The participants in the research study were born and educated in India. Each one met the entry criteria of the Masters' degree entry at the new Midlands university, which does not require students to have had previous work experience, but this experience is desirable. Students were in the

UK studying for a period of 12 months, and some hoped to remain in the UK following a successful application for a post-study work visa. Students previously possessed a range of different undergraduate degrees, ranging from Engineering, Computing and Commerce-related degrees. The average age of the students was 23 years of age, and they were visiting the UK for the first time. I had experienced interaction with these students as a tutor, and subsequently formed more personal relations with them as we embarked on the research process. For example, some students kept me informed of their personal travel arrangements home, and of family commitments outside the context of the interview structure. Students were interviewed a total of three times, which enabled the researcher to check the understanding of the views shared by participants in the interviews. Students were given copies of transcripts to check accuracy. Bryman and Bell (2006) refer to this process as respondent validation, or member validation.

In terms of transferability of this qualitative research study (Geertz 1973 cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:413), suggests that this can be met through the development of thick description of the social phenomena. As participant observation was not appropriate for this research study, semi-structured interviews with a small number of students were used as a means of exploring depth of experience, as opposed to breadth. Depth rather than breadth is a preoccupation with qualitative research, and such an approach can therefore concern itself with contextual uniqueness.

Dependability and confirmability are the two remaining criteria in the category of 'trustworthiness' that Guba and Lincoln 1985 (cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:413) encourage qualitative researchers to address. Confirmability concerns itself with researcher's ability to maintain a balance of their views or bias with that of the participants involved in the research. The findings need to be '…reflective of the participants and the enquiry itself, rather than a creation of the researcher's biases or prejudices' (Marshall and Rossman 1995:143). Marshall and Rossman refer to this as the 'goodness of the qualitative research'. The section on 'reflexivity of the researcher' in Chapter Three, of this thesis, attempts to address some of the researcher's bias by discussing the subjectivity of the researcher in this research study. Dependability is an aspect of the 'trustworthiness' of the qualitative researcher (Bryman and Bell 2006). This requires the auditing of the research process. Researchers are advised to keep

complete records of the problem formulation, the selection of participants, the field work notes (if applicable), interview transcripts and data analysis decisions. Many of these aspects are discussed in Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this study.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) identify an additional criterion for the establishment and assessment of the quality of qualitative research, which is 'authenticity'. They suggest criteria for the inclusion of authenticity in such a research study:

Table 3.3 Criteria for Authenticity

Fairness: Does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting?
Ontological authenticity: Does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social world?
Educative authenticity: Does the research help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting?
Catalytic authenticity: Has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?
Tactical authenticity: Has the research empowered members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action?

Source (Bryman and Bell 2006:414)

A great deal of effort was put into achieving 'fairness' in this research. I see this as an important and highly-relevant issue, especially given the power difference that was highlighted in the previous section on reflexivity. In terms of fairness, the researcher did set out to explore the views of students as they experienced living and studying in a new Midlands university. Students had an average age of 23 years and had not previously lived outside of their home country. Students who volunteered to take part in the research were largely single and they consisted of both male and female students, although I one participant was married and had come to the UK with her husband. All of the students lived off campus in private accommodation, with two of the students commuting from other towns for either all or part of the academic year.

Ethical issues

The research was conducted at a new Midlands university at which I am a full-time member of the lecturing staff. I secured ethical approval for my research from the School of Education at the University of Nottingham at which I am undertaking my Doctorate in Education. All staff and postgraduate research students planning to carry out a research investigation must complete an Ethical Approval form. The application form is framed as a checklist of items designed to give the Ethics Approval Committee information about the proposed research to assist its deliberations, and to promote ethical awareness, ethical practice and collective responsibility for any ongoing struggles and dilemmas of an ethical nature in research. A similar ethics form also had to be submitted to the university where I am employed, and where the data collection was to be undertaken, and where all staff and research students must likewise follow due process.

Qualitative research is concerned with the collection of data from people, and questions might be raised in the consideration of their needs and sensitivities (Israel and Hay 2006). For example, the process of gaining access to participants for a research study is an ethical consideration. The researcher must consider the methods available to them to gain access to potential participants (Minichiello et al 1992). In my research study, this matter was of particular concern, as I was both a researcher and teacher at the new Midlands university. The snowball sampling technique that was chosen minimized my own direct contact with any the student who volunteered to participate in the study.

Informed consent is an important part of the research process and should be handled carefully (Bryman and Bell 2006). The relationship between the participant and the researcher should not be exploitative, and one should consider who the research is for. It may be considered ethical to establish a rapport with participants if it means publication of research and that participants are aware of the purpose of the research study (Minichiello et al 1992). One particular concern of mine regarding informed consent was the possibility of a difference in cultural meaning being attached to the research process by the participants. Those students, who volunteered, expressed

their views that they wished to help share knowledge about the experiences of international students at the university. Informed consent included making the participants aware that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed at a later date for the submission of the doctoral research. The level of participant awareness of the research process at the start of the project could be questioned if students had not previously been involved in a research study as a participant. Students studying at a foreign university may not feel comfortable providing informed consent immediately after being briefed on the nature of the interview. Students were therefore provided with a consent form and given a brief explanation of the research study. They were then asked to bring the forms to the first interview should they decide to participate. If there were any queries or questions, these would be dealt with by email or prior to the research interview.

Research that is likely to harm participants is regarded by most people as unacceptable. Bogdam and Biklen (1992) claim that qualitative research is dominated by two ethical concerns: informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm. 'Harm can entail: physical harm; harm to participants' development or self-esteem; stress; harm to career prospects for future employment' (Diesner and Crandall, cited in Bryman and Bell 2006:133). It is the responsibility of the researcher to carefully assess the possibility of harm to research participants, and the extent to which any such harm can be minimized. The issue of harm is addressed in ethical codes by advocating care over maintaining the confidentiality of records and the anonymity of accounts. This was particularly important in my research, as the cohort from which the participants were selected was unusually small, thus making these participants more identifiable, which therefore increased the need to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Students were informed of this risk. Confidentiality and anonymity were addressed by the researcher throughout the research process. A related ethical issue I had to address in my research was that of the control and use of the data obtained. Easterby-Smith et al (1991:65) suggest that '…we can assume that it is the researcher who has this control and ownership, and that therefore she must exercise due ethical responsibility by not publicising or circulating any information that is likely to harm the interests of individuals'.

During the interviews, participants would be asked to talk about their experiences living and studying in the Midlands in England. Some of these experiences may contain very personal information, such as how their personal values have changed, or their experiences relating to students and staff within the university. This would require trust on the part of the participants. If they felt uneasy or uncomfortable and unable to trust the interviewer, then this could impact on the data (Boeije 2010). To address this, firstly participants had previously met and got to know the researcher in a formal classroom situation over a period of three months whilst undertaking a Masters' module. Secondly, at no point in the interviews were participants coerced into providing personal information. Students were made aware that all data provided in the interview would be treated sensitively, and in particular would not be shared with other members of staff at the university, meaning that confidentiality could be maintained. Information would also be stored securely, at the researcher's home as opposed to the university office environment. However, as regards confidentiality and anonymity, it is worth noting that, due to the nature of the snowball sampling technique used in this research study, some students may have been aware that certain Masters' students were involved in the research study, but were unaware of the information disclosed within the interview process.

The appendices feature blank copies of ethical approval forms and the participant information and consent forms.

Summary

The qualitative approach undertaken in this research study helped to collect data via semi-structured interviews. The collection of qualitative data used has been discussed, including some of the limitations and how these limitations were managed. The interviews were the main method of data collection, and were felt to be an effective means of exploring the experiences and views of the experience of international students studying and living in the UK. The framework used guided the research, and participants were able to be interviewed in each of the three phases of the study over the academic year. The first two interviews were conducted after six to seven months

of arriving at the new Midlands university, with the final interview being held six to seven months later, by which time students would be near completion of their master's degree.

The next chapter presents the research findings, discussion and analysis using the qualitative content analysis approach.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIVIDUAL AND RELATIONAL THEMES

Introduction

This chapter will discuss two of the identity themes (individual and relational) that were highlighted within the data. The remaining themes (organisational and societal) will be discussed in chapter 5.

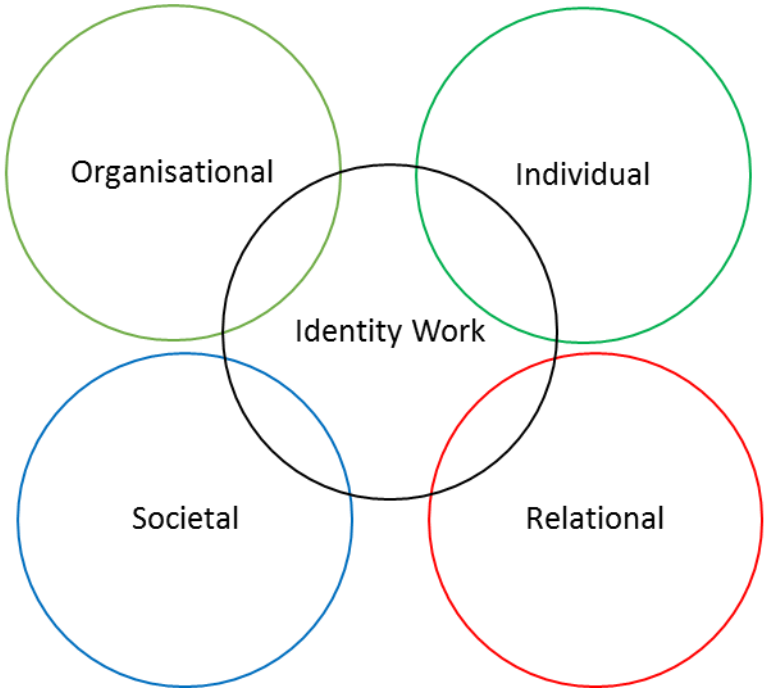
Organisation and presentation of the research findings

The organisation and presentation of the research findings have been shaped by the themes that were identified through the use of 'directed content analysis' (Miles and Huberman 1994). This approach to content analysis enables the researcher to refer to previous research in order to guide the analysis of the data. The chosen research was that of Alvesson and Wilmott (2002), who identified three themes in the identity work of employees, which are individual, relational and organisational. Miles and Huberman suggest that the nature of 'directed content analysis' allows for the emergence of further themes to arise from the data.

A fourth theme was identified in the data analysis of the seven international students, referred to as the 'societal' aspect of identity work [and is discussed further in chapters 5 and 6]. The societal theme forms an important part of the identity work of students in their year abroad. This includes actual social interactions or desired social interactions within the local community, such as private housing, employment, shopping or socialising. Wider societal issues were also present in the participants' identity work relating to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the application for post-study work visas.

The diagram overleaf illustrates the 4 themes that emerged through the analysis of the data. Each theme will be discussed using the data from each of the seven participants. The 4 themes are not mutually exclusive, and some overlapping does occur.

Figure 4.1 The Identity Work of Indian International Students



The individual theme consisted of some of the challenges that individuals encountered when entering the new culture, such as culture shock, well-being issues and so on.

The relational theme consisted of support from family and friends, and support from a peer support network which consisted of other students.

Individual and Relational Identity Themes

The focus of this research was the identity work of Indian students during their 12-15 months study abroad, which revealed the ongoing change of an individual's identity. This micro-level approach to internationalisation incorporated a discursive approach to identity. The opportunity for these students to reveal their identity work was created through a number of semi-structured research interviews which were repeated throughout their study abroad. Identity work is often revealed by individuals through conversation (Benwell & Stokoe 2006), and research shows that individuals may craft new identities in response to new socio-cultural environments (Block 2010).

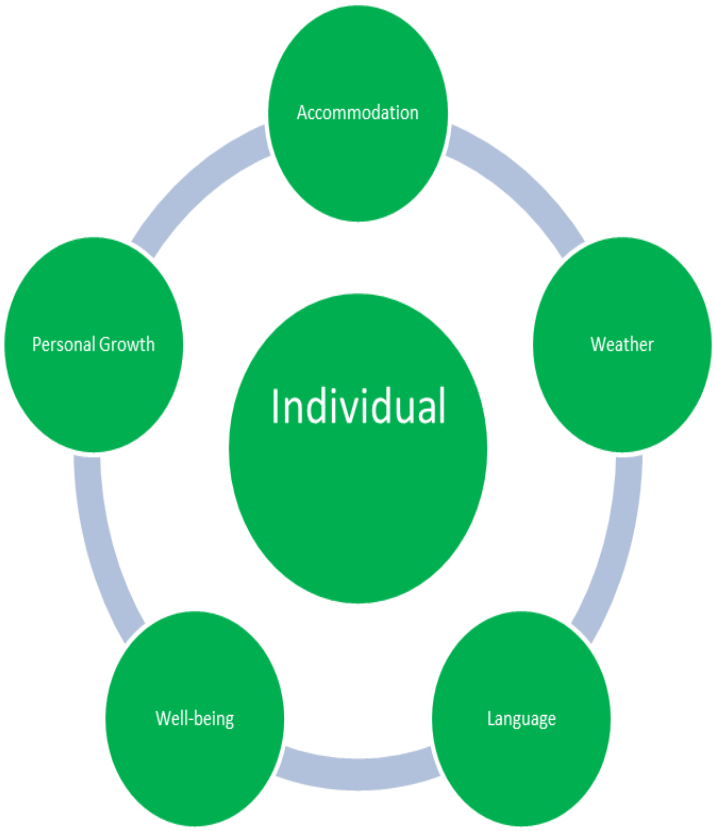
As these students undertook international study abroad, their new social/cultural experiences, personal aspirations, peers, family, part-time employment, local community and teachers formed an active part of their personal 'identity work' in complex ways. For the participants in this research, their 'identity work' was a continuous ongoing process, illustrating the temporary and dynamic nature of identity across various social situations. On occasion, participants revealed through their talk that identities had been 'ascribed' to them by other people such as family members, teachers, peers or local community, as well as wider society. In other situations their identity position was the result of their own motivation or aspirations, such as future employment or becoming an MBA graduate and then returning to India. Identity work also incorporated a re-positioning or re-adjustment of the participant's own identity, where identity positions or opportunities were not always available to them. Disappointment with an assessment grade or failure to secure employment can cause the individual to re-position their identity (this is discussed further in Chapter 6).

Theme One: Individual

Several different sub-categories were identified through the coding of the data for each of the four themes. Moving from one country to another country creates many opportunities for identity work. The participants in this research had never previously left India; indeed, Nia and Beauty had never previously left their parents' homes or managed their own expenses, where Nari had travelled to the UK accompanied by her husband. Daily life adjustment included such issues as the cost of living, accommodation, language, food and the weather, all aspects that the student had to adjust to and manage.

The interviews were conducted over twelve months, which recorded the progress of the participants over time and gave the participants the opportunity to discuss their initial impressions, and moreover their experiences of living in a new country and the adjustments they needed to make. A discursive approach to the data collection and analysis enabled the participants to share their identity work with the researcher as they constructed themselves as international students within their study abroad.

Figure 4.2 Sub categories of the Individual Theme



Accommodation

Accommodation formed an important part of the identity work of these international students during their study abroad. Unlike UK students, international students have usually travelled thousands of miles before they reached their University accommodation, and furthermore they may have had limited or no experience of foreign travel or life abroad. International students are also likely to travel alone to their final destination, often arriving out of office hours:

> It was already dark and I was travelling from (sic) the last fourteen hours you can say, carrying a lot of stuff, so I was tired and err since I didn't know anybody here so I[…], I found, I found a little difficulty to [err] you grab a place to sleep. (Carl)

Lack of affordable accommodation in the city meant that finding suitable accommodation was difficult. Nia revealed that, due to her lack of funds, she had to share a bedroom with another student because she could not afford a bedroom of her own:

> I am facing some problem (sic) with money actually. Here the living costs and all the expenses are very high, so that is quite difficult (sic) manage. I came here I had no accommodation with me so I [..] so I just came to know a girl who actually, she was living alone. She wanted someone to share with her. It was very difficult for me to manage with her. (Nia)

Another difficulty that these international students faced was that they were enrolled on the January cohort of the MBA programme, which meant the majority of private student accommodation had already been occupied. This impacted on where and with whom these students could live. University accommodation is a site for identity construction, where students can develop cross-cultural skills by sharing these social spaces with others. The findings show that the type of accommodation that a student chooses can be an important part of their identity work. The combination of all of the above factors meant that the opportunity to share with any other students was very limited.

Those participants that were living within the vicinity of the University were all living with other Indians, whilst Nari and Beauty were commuting as they were living with family members. Exposure to European housemates did not exist, nor was it an option for these students. This supports the view of Speechley (2012), who suggests that university accommodation provision can enforce segregation between host and international students.

Sharing accommodation with students from the same culture can often mean that individuals are able to maintain their national identity within the group and re-enforce it, as opposed to experiencing opportunities to gain awareness of different cultures. Robin had previously lived in a hostel whilst employed in India. Co-national living in the UK was the preferred choice for Robin; he felt comfortable living with other Indian males:

> For one week I was searching for friends in [redacted]. Then I found some Indians staying and now actually [ ], now I am staying with them. So it is okay for me. We are three guys who share a house. So normal life. Nothing special. (Robin)

However it is noted that the re-enforcement of national identity is not guaranteed in circumstances where students decide to live with individuals of the same nationality. During his interview, Suri referred to the differences in behaviour and the language barrier between people from the north and south of India. Although these perceived differences were significant, he saw his new housemates as a source of cultural learning. In addition, he was optimistic that the cultural differences could be managed, and that this was an opportunity for some form of cultural exchange:

> We met. Carl he was lost as we were. North Indians v South Indians they are aggressive and not good nature (sic). Also language barriers, we weren't comfortable because of above. But we thought it would have benefits. (Suri)

However, the cultural differences between the housemates deteriorated to a point where no one was speaking to one another. Suri shared a bedroom with Carl in order to reduce their costs of renting. He was particularly stressed about the situation within the household, so much so that it affected his studies. His desire to restore the status quo within the household provided a new avenue of identity work for him:

> Took me between 10-15 days to get back on track to 3 months. I couldn't settle down. In my circle other (sic) had had a fight. Also had work on 2 assignments. No one to help me. Two of us share a room in my house. I didn't experience good vibes and I entered into problems. I didn't feel right. I had to submit 2 assessments at same time. I managed to get everyone back together after fall out. (Suri)

Decisions to live with co-nationals can lead to the re-enforcement of national identity (Block 2010). Co-national living can include sharing the same food, language and

similar cultural values. However, in Nia's case, she felt she had gained additional personal benefits from such an arrangement. Her house move meant that not only would she would no longer have to share her bedroom with a stranger, but it was an opportunity to gain help with her studies, as she found that she could trade her culinary skills in return for help with her studies from her housemates. She saw this arrangement as helping her in her future identity work as a post-MBA student:

> "I have some problems with expenses but with the time it would also be okay. I do cooking and they help me. It's nice to get education from here, because it is really going to help me in my future." (Nia)

In contrast, Beauty's national identity was reinforced through her decision to live with her relatives, who had lived in the UK for more than thirty years. Beauty had shared her parents' home in India prior to studying in the UK. She felt that living in the UK with family members was not very different from living with her own family in India:

> It's more like my home actually. I stay with my auntie, my mom's sister, because food and all it is not a problem for me. (Beauty)

The identity work of the participants in this research varied due to their choice of accommodation and choice of housemates during their study abroad. Beauty felt that, despite having the familiarity of Indian food and a common language with family members, she was not able to develop the friendships that she would have liked to during her study abroad:

> …and err because even when my aunt and uncle were there my cousins, they are in London, so that's why I got some (sic) bored. If the same age people we can talk a lot, so that's why I felt. (Beauty)

The interview data did suggest that there were clear gender divisions in terms of personal histories and levels of independence amongst the participants. The research study comprised of three females and four males. The four males had all either previously boarded as an undergraduate student or had lived away from the family home having completed their studies. Despite Carl and Robin's previous experience

of living independently, they reported difficulties in managing day to day living in the UK. Of the three females, two of the females were single and one was married. The females who were single in this research had not lived independently outside of their parents' home before studying in the UK. In turn this impacted on their international student identity work. For example selecting suitable accommodation and managing household costs signified a form of independence for them:

> This is the first time I have left my parents, everyone, and I came far away from my home. They say no, you are not a little girl you will be very forward, and get experience, and MBA programme, and you should live alone and study. They used to tell me you can't always be soft. (Beauty)

Nari, who was the only married female student in the research project, said she had little choice about where she lived or with whom she lived. She was expected to live with her husband, near to where he had found employment in the UK. Nari was also dependent on her husband's wages to pay for both of their living costs. However, the location of her husband's job meant that she had an hour's commute each day to the university. Initially, they both lived with an aunt until they found accommodation for themselves. Despite the cultural familiarity of living with family members, Nari felt that her responsibilities as a wife and a student placed additional demands on her. She found it difficult to manage her household duties, her full-time studies as well as the commuting distance:

> I need to manage err house err things like everything. I need to manage my husband is coming back (sic) [err, err] at three o'clock in afternoon and [err] at the time I pause [err] to get food ready for him so [err] lots of things are there. I need to cook myself and manage those things and I need to study also. (Nari)

What is evident from the analysis of the data is that there are a range of experiences amongst the participants that subsequently impacted on their identity as an international student in different ways. Accommodation choices provided a venue for many identity-related aspects to take place. These included the re-enforcement of national identity amongst Indian students where they shared their experiences of

managing their finances, independence, wider friendship circles, and overcoming cultural differences. All of these factors contributed to their respective identity work and or reconstructions of their identities as international students.

What is highlighted in the participants' personal accounts of their study abroad is the apparent inter-connectedness of the different dimensions of identity (individual, relational, organisational, and societal).

Climate/Weather

The students in this research were also required to manage a dramatic change in climate as part of their daily lives in the UK. On departure from India, the students would have left temperatures in excess of 80 degrees Fahrenheit and then arrived in the UK facing ice, snow and freezing temperatures. This aspect of their international student identity was particularly difficult for them to cope with. Their sense of being an international student abroad was affected by their health as well as their personal motivation, which made adjustment to their new life difficult. Such personal challenges occurred within the first few months of arrival, which to some extent hit some students hard. However, over time most did learn to adapt and enjoy more of their study abroad as the weather became warmer.

The combination of the cold climate and the commuting actually contributed to feelings of despondency for Beauty, and caused her to rethink her decision to be a student abroad:

> Every day, I travelled for the lectures. That was very difficult for me. So the main thing was the weather. From January it's a bit cold and since I'm from this very warm country, I felt it's very cold here, and also I'm not satisfied and I felt shall I go back to my country. (Beauty)

How students feel about the climate should not be underestimated as they try to manage the differences. The weather featured strongly in the early part of Robin's identity work, as he felt unable to leave his accommodation to attend his classes at

university. He could not carry out his daily life in the same way as he had in India. He managed the differences in temperature, but he remained indoors:

> The temperature, I mean the winter season is like in January, it is totally different you like (sic) in January, it is totally different you can't go out as much. Not normal. (Robin)

However, as the weather started to improve, some students felt they managed the climate change better, and some saw improvements in their personal health:

> Yes its bit cold until March until February its bit cold, so I have to wear so many clothes and all (sic). So umm I got fewer colds and everything, and some illness then I used to that weather in UK. Then umm after March I am used to this climate and all, everything [umm], [err] then studies wise I am ok. I felt I am ok now I can do something my studies and all now I'm satisfied with everything. (Beauty)

The cold weather did contribute to feelings of homesickness for these students as they compared their feelings of their old life in India together with their new life in the UK. The eventual familiarity with the weather and local shopping times indicated some cultural adjustment:

> Yeah err [ ]. You go to a new place, you don't feel familiar with the place immediately but by April/June I started knowing a lot of people. [Erm] I know where to shop, where to go, I was familiar with the ways; - I was familiar with the City and the City things – when to go out and when not to go out. I was familiar with the weather as well I was familiar with the daylight and when it's dark, when it's not. So yeah I mean [err] started feeling a little connected and I was settling down by that time. (Carl)

The weather also acted as a means of sharing cultural adjustments with friends and family. The weather was, therefore, a source of identity construction for those students returning to India during their studies. Suri was able to share his experience of life in the UK with family members. His difficulty in acclimatising back to Indian weather was a source of ridicule amongst his family, and they referred to him as a 'UK returner':

> ..yeah, the thing is yeah, when I went back they use the term a lot, but this time it happened, but I tried to avoid it a few times but sometimes it was really hot, I used to make a fuss it's really hot, and they say 'yes, you are a UK returner'. (Suri)

Despite the improvement in weather temperatures, Nia was still experiencing difficulty in adjusting to the UK climate six months after she had arrived. She found it difficult to cope, as she had no previous experience of unpredictable weather, which left her confused and with a feeling of not being able to cope:

> I am facing some problem still sometimes weather it is unpredictable, day is unpredictable, day is unpredictable and some time it rain (sic) some time it sunny and some time it difficult for me [err] to manage with this weather. (Nia)

The weather provided a venue for many things to happen as the participants tried to manage feelings associated with home and abroad, whilst learning to manage tensions such as the drastically reduced temperatures and the unpredictable nature of the weather in order to manage their academic and social lives. All these contributed to their reconstructions of their identities as international students abroad. Within the first few months of arrival, such personal challenges hit some students hard. However, over time, most did learn to adapt and enjoy their study abroad as the weather eventually became warmer.

Language Difficulties: Coping with a range of English accents

Language impacts on a range of areas in the life of the international student abroad. It can affect the ability to develop new cultural skills or integrate into new social situations with flatmates, students, friends and teachers. It is important to acknowledge here that the Indian students who took part in the research had completed their upper level schooling in English. English is also recognised as the language of the intellectual elite, with origins within India's post-colonial roots. First and foremost, the language difficulties reported were specific to the range of English accents that these students were unfamiliar with both on and off-campus. The students experienced difficulties in understanding the varied regional accents of their tutors which contributed to them 'not

feeling part of their new academic community'. They had not studied or worked outside of India, and therefore had little exposure to regional English accents:

> So then the English first I didn't understand to be honest. I didn't understand anything, its different accent and all (sic). I didn't understand then. (Beauty)

The language problems she experienced within the classroom affected her ability to learn within the new teaching and learning context, which created confusion and self-doubt. 'Learners have agency and are likely to try to shape the social context in which they learn rather than passively let it position them' (Khatib and Ghamari 2011:1703). The agency of the individual student should therefore be acknowledged within their identity work. In the following example, Beauty had to develop the confidence and resilience ask for help during her classes:

> I didn't understand so I used to ask from (sic) the lecturers, actually. When err, finance lecturer err Brian did talk, oh god I didn't understand anything! Ask others, had doubts, ask again and again. Err that's what I felt. After that I am ok. (Beauty)

Suri believed that his previous business knowledge and skills gained at undergraduate level would help him adjust to his new UK MBA identity. However, during the first three months he too did not feel confident about understanding what the lecturer was saying in class and the content of the classes. The tutors' regional accents were a problem for him also, and impacted upon his own learning and identity. He was unable to maintain his previous identity work as a business student where he felt secure and knowledgeable, and thus he had to adjust slowly over a period of five months within the new learning context building up his confidence and resilience:

> July was very good start of second semester and I could relate to what they were saying. (Suri)

Language can impact on the self-image of the individual (Khatib and Ghamari 2011). An individual who constructs a positive view of themselves can develop an ability to communicate freely in the classroom. Nia's refers to herself as a bad speaker of English. 'This formation of identity could then lead the student to reinforce this perceived identity as actual reality through behaviour that will either lead to the

student's English improving or weakening'(Khatib and Ghamari 2011:1705). After six months of studying in the UK, Nia still regarded herself as not being competent as an English speaker:

> English is not my language but still [err] I know I am not very good at that. But still [err] I know I will have to take some time but after some time definitely, I will [err]. I will have, I'll have grab that language (sic). Yeah I would come to know that how to communicate with people who are here, and how they work. (Nia)

Nia's self-confidence increased when she was able to communicate with customers in her part-time job. However, the research suggests that opportunities for the participants to develop language and communication skills were largely located within a classroom setting. Casual employment did not appear to provide opportunities for all participants to communicate with their co-workers:

> And you know I did not find a friendly nature when I went to work in [redacted], people never used to talk to me. Didn't have that interaction at [redacted]. One manager, used to talk, to come and talk, to ask do you have any problems? He used to talk to me. It never happened, they used to stare at me. (Suri)

The findings show that language played an important role in the formation and expression of identity. Accents in particular were seen by the students as a barrier to learning. Although the participants came from India where English is an established language of education, it was evident that there were differences between the English they had grown up with and the English they encountered during their studies. Students experienced difficulties in understanding the regional accents of their tutors. Opportunities for the students to practise English were limited in social situations off-campus, such as casual employment, due to the low levels of receptiveness from co-workers.

Well-being issues

Previous research suggests that well-being issues are a challenge for international students. It can be argued that well-being issues have two origins: firstly, those stemming from individual psychological issues, such as homesickness, loneliness, depression and stress (Anderson et al 2009), and secondly those stemming from issues associated with socio-cultural adaptation, such as 'perceived discrimination or adjusting to new academic environments' (discussed further in Chapter 5).

Homesickness was referred to by the students in this research. Homesickness can often affect an individual's sense of well-being. On one hand, a university environment can highlight for an individual their innate desire to belong, to feel socially accepted. When that need is not easily or immediately met, intense homesickness can result. However, in some situations where the differences between two cultures (culture of origin and host culture) are so great an individual may feel unhappy, depressed, or anxious in terms of those differences.

The findings re-affirm that successful adjustment required these students to navigate the challenges they encountered. An individual can become very unhappy with their new life and refer back to their identity in their previous culture as a source of comfort. However, homesickness was experienced to varying degrees within this research project. The males in the research had previously completed several years of employment prior to enrolling on their Masters' degree. Interestingly, they had previously experienced homesickness whilst boarding as students in India. For example, Asash felt that his previous experiences had helped him with some of his re-adjustment in the UK. He had had lived independently of his parents both as a student in India and more recently as an employee. He felt that these previous experiences help him cope better with feelings of homesickness.

Not seeing friends and family on a regular basis, the cold weather and the lack of familiar Indian food triggered feelings of homesickness amongst the participants:

> Yeah actually [err] this is the first time I left my parents, everyone and I came far away from my home. It's the first time so after I came, sometimes I used to cry, cry, I would call my parents' every day and talk and I want to come back because I can't live without you and all. (Beauty)

It was apparent that managing homesickness was an important part of international student identity. Beauty saw her homesickness as temporary and something that was necessary to overcome in order to secure post-MBA employment in the UK. She felt that she was making progress in her adjustment to the new culture and felt more settled in her new life:

> Because it's not like earlier days, and I am used with (sic) the food, atmosphere, friends and the family and everything and now [err….]. I would really like it to stay in England. (Beauty)

Well-being is an important part of international student identity and homesickness was experienced by all of the participants. Students managed the cultural differences in weather, language, food, family life and a sense of belonging to varying degrees. There did appear to be gender differences in terms of how well individuals were coping with the adjustment within the new culture, with the male students having had previous experience of coping with homesickness during their studies in India. Homesickness was found to be accentuated during the initial arrival period, and was evident to different degrees throughout the study abroad.

Personal Growth

Previous studies (Gu & Schweisfurth 2006; Gu et al 2010) support the view that study abroad is a source of personal development and growth. Personal growth appeared to arise where the participants in this research were able to manage the individual psychological and socio-cultural issues during their study abroad. The ability to reflect on such experiences is evidenced here:

> However, living in UK is actually good [err] it is beneficial for me. I'm living my dream because I always want (sic) to come here. I'm not regretting my decision what I took a few months back – it's like a living a new life. (Nia)

We cannot overestimate what study abroad meant for Nia and Beauty. The individualised nature of their previous identity and new identity must be acknowledged. Firstly, living apart from their parents helped them to develop new skills such as managing their own finances. Secondly, living independently created opportunities to increase self-confidence in their own abilities. Finally, the challenges of living in a new culture enabled the students to develop coping strategies and a belief in themselves that they could overcome obstacles. Study abroad therefore symbolised both a new life for Beauty and with it identity work as an international student. She was able to manage living independently and manage her own finances for the first time in her life. This supports the views of Finn and Green (2009) that students abroad can benefit from new experiences in terms of both personal skills and transferrable skills:

> I got a bit confident now and [err….] what to say, I know how to manage things how to take myself through any difficulties and all. That is what I learn here! (Beauty)

One area of personal growth is where the individual becomes more open-minded about the changes that are taking place in themselves. Worldviews held by an individual may change as a result of study abroad (Gu and Schweisfurth 2015). Carl realised that his own behaviour and views, which he described as 'typically Indian', had changed as a result of his study abroad. He saw himself as possessing more self-awareness and a different level of maturity, which he felt was reflected in how he related to other people:

> I guess I have started understanding things more, even from the others' perspective…I have started listening more, and I have started analysing things. (Carl)

This example appears to support the view that study abroad can result in a perceived increase in self-efficacy (Milstein 2005). Similarly, Coleman (2011) believes that, in turn, this self-efficacy can be presented to potential employers as independence and self-reliance, adaptability, enhanced confidence and self-awareness. The findings support this view, where the participants saw study abroad as a transition to their post-MBA identity in terms of career development. For the students in this research, the study abroad was a means of developing themselves personally and professionally.

For Robin, study abroad was an opportunity for career development as he had previously experienced a period of instability in his own employment situation. During a re-organisation in his previous employment, he had managed to retain a full-time job but this meant a different role and an increased workload. This caused him unhappiness, and he wanted more out of his life. He therefore considered the year abroad as an opportunity to grow:

> So during that time it was my initial step to get something better in my life. The economic condition and working in my old company. There was no immediate growth I was just travelling in the same work (sic), no change there. So at that time I just decided you need to do something extra just to have a growth (sic) because you can't just sit in the same thing and not move. (Robin)

In a recent survey of 64% of graduate employers it was found that students were actually given greater responsibility where they had gained an international background (ICEF Monitor 2014). 'Despite many convincing arguments about the importance of study abroad programs, there is still, however, limited evidence about students' gains from their international educational' (Di Pietro 2013:5). Previous findings suggest that students are not always able to make a positive correlation between work experience and personal development (Maiden & Kinsey 2006). In contrast, the findings here suggest that, for these postgraduate students, study abroad was a means by which they could enhance their identity to that of UK MBA status, and thus revise their own sense of their professional identity.

Summary

The expected benefits of study abroad can include: academic achievement, greater cultural appreciation, personal development and a world view. Within this context, personal growth is not treated in a linear fashion. In contrast, it was found to be a complex set of inter-relationships between language, weather, well-being, accommodation, social interaction, personal growth and academic achievements, thereby supporting the view of (Gu and Schweisfurth 2015). The findings suggest that such organisation can result in the re-configuration of an individual's identity.

Having discussed the re-configuration of an international student's identity the latter part of the chapter explores the relational aspects of study abroad. Relational aspects include: friends, family and peers who offer support and encouragement to the international student during their study abroad.

Theme Two: Relational

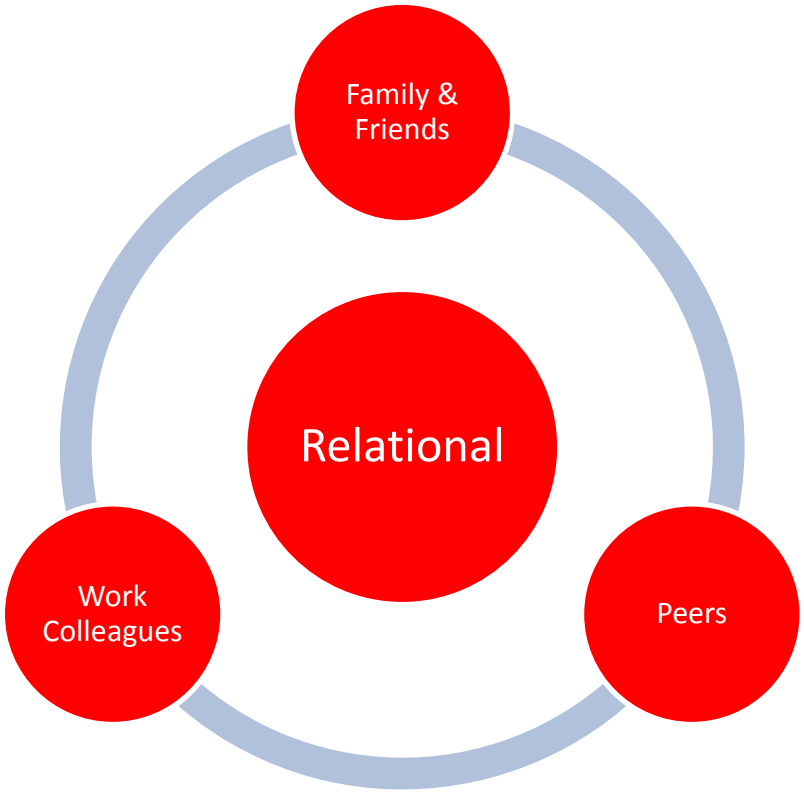


Figure 4.3 Sub-categories of the Relational Theme

The following discussion will explore the relational aspects of study abroad, and the roles that these aspects might play in influencing international student identity. The relational aspects of identity include: friends, family and peers who offer support and encouragement to the international student during their study abroad. Friends play a crucial role in the lives of international students and provide vital support to those studying abroad (Bilicen 2014; Hendrickson et al 2011).

Furthermore, a student-led study group formed over time at the university under study through the regular use of the library and similar study patterns. Students were able to gain support from this particular network of other students. In particular, the network provided a means of support when the students were confronted with the challenge of new ways of studying. However, the nature of this support changed over the course of time as students became more familiar with their new environment, and were consequently able to work more confidently as independent learners.

Each of the participants referred to having developed new friendships during their study abroad, but this varied between students in terms of the frequency with which they met as well as the nature of the friendship. Housemates and students from an earlier Masters' cohorts formed the basis of these friendships. Nari was unable to socialise with students from her cohort because she was commuting from another city and had duties to perform for her family; she relied on a social networking site to remain in contact with two other students from her cohort. She was regularly invited to parties and social gatherings, but was unable to attend.

Each of the participants was from the January cohort, which comprised of twenty students; in comparison, the September cohort had over 100 students enrolled. Although a smaller cohort of students may mean easier opportunities to develop closer bonds, some of the students wanted to develop additional friendships with students from the earlier cohort, but found this difficult to achieve. The friendships that formed with students from the September cohort were therefore ad-hoc, relying on chance meetings in the library.

Students referred to the cultural expectations placed upon them within their home culture where they must maintain family obligations. As regards the relational aspects of this work, students needed to maintain regular contact with family members, as well as considering a possible return home to India for special celebrations such as a wedding or engagement, or other family occasions. In terms of their identity work, all of the participants were expect to remain in contact with their parents throughout their studies. The nature of the communication did vary from daily Skype communication on first arrival, to a less frequent basis as students became more settled in their new life. Although students referred to speaking to both parents, communication with their

mother was seen as a cultural requirement. The international students in this research referred to the emotional support or financial support provided by their parents.

Support from Family and Friends

The choice of destination country in which to study guided by family members for some students, for example where other family members had previously studied or had settled in. For some participants, this could offer an opportunity for support in terms of knowledge about the country, the education system and the job market:

> First of all I applied to Australia because my brother is there. And [err] I applied for Australia and it is very expensive it's like [err] in our money (sic) we have to show 121 million in the bank account [ ]. So, I thought [ ] leave that plan and try for UK because my auntie is here, my mom's sister…So they say come to UK because you have already done the Sunderland University degree so it is easy for you. So come here. (Beauty)

The support of family and friends not only acts a means of emotional support, but also as a source of identity construction. In the following interview extract, Beauty recounts how her parents view her experiences and how they regarded that study abroad was an opportunity to develop a more mature attitude and for her to be able to manage her life abroad:

> They used to call me every day and everything but now it's once a week or something. They know I can manage everything they are very confident about me. My dad used to tell me, you are little changes (sic) in your talk. That is what he said and he encourage in each and every, so now I am ok (Beauty)

For others, the support from family was both financial and emotional. Many of the families were helping the participants to fund their existence in the UK, but with the expectation that their son or daughter would 'change' and should change as a result of their experiences abroad:

> Because I am one and only child (sic) a girl. So they say no, no you have to get experience and you are not a little girl you will be very forward and get experience, and MBA programme, and you should live alone, and study. That is life. (Beauty)

Family support is only one of many sources of support open to individuals: International students form friendships with individuals from their own country, from other countries and from the host country' (Hendrickson et al 2011, p1). In contrast, the identity work of the students in this research project revealed that, although friendship formation was seen as playing a significant role within the study abroad, students were largely unable to make friends from the host country (see Chapter 5 for further discussion).

The findings confirm support for Bochner's (2007) view that a co-national network is important to the international student as it acts as a means to affirm and express the culture of origin. At the time of the data collection, the nature of postgraduate recruitment at the university meant that there were limited opportunities to meet host nationals whereas previous research such as Bochner suggests that this could help establish a network for the individual with host nationals who could help facilitate academic and professional aspirations. As a result, the co-nationals would try and help each other as best as they could (or ask seniors – academic adjustment is discussed further in Chapter 5).

Hendrickson et al (2011) state that friendship formation plays a significant role in the study abroad experience and that unique friendship combinations are possible. Although it is suggested that international students form friendships with individuals from their own country, from other countries and from the host country', this was not experienced by all the participants:

> I am not a person who goes to parties and all. And my friends say if you come to parties and clubbing you make so many friends. Yes I would like to make friends from England but I didn't get (sic) chance. (Beauty)

It is suggested in the literature that friendship formation with local students encapsulates affiliative adjustment, and has a positive effect on academic success by diminishing the levels of anxiety and alienation that the international student may experience during their studies (Trice 2004; Olivas and Li 2006; Sullivan 2008). The following section of this chapter will explore the meanings attached to a peer support network.

Peer Support Network

A peer support network is a social network that is often created by an individual when they face personal challenges when adjusting to a new country and/or culture (the personal challenges that students face were discussed in the first part of this chapter). Membership of social networks such as these can be based on mono-cultural groups or in groups where membership mirrors the diversity within the student's degree programme or seminar group.

What was apparent from the research was that the students developed new and existing support networks, whilst family and friends also continued to be a source or support.

The nature of peer support was two-fold. Firstly, it acted as a means of support for personal challenges in day to day living. Secondly, it helped support these students with academic-related matters such as preparing for seminars, understanding lecture content and assessment preparation.

> Yeah, friends from the MBA course. Err, most of them are Indians, they are very friendly and used to cook together used to eat together (sic), err we like use do group studies, and err use do the assignments together. We sit in the library whole day and do it. It is very helpful also the friends and all. (Beauty)

Students were supported by other students on the programme and set up informal study groups where the students would study together, problem solve and manage other study skills. However, for one participant the membership of the peer support network highlighted the differences between India and the UK, as well as the lack of choice in terms of whom you would like to help you:

> The thing is there I noticed friends I choose you know what I want what I desire (sic). Here I choose friends from what I get. (Suri)

The peer support network in the UK created tensions for this individual whilst managing his identities of 'here' and 'there':

> I didn't choose my friends here, I have got them. That is the situation here. Back in India I had a choice, I won't talk to you the thing is according to my perception you are not a nice person. Here I don't have that choice. (Suri)

Although these findings support previous research such as that of UKCOSA (2004) who suggest that co-nationals can offer personal support to an individual student whilst abroad, they also indicate how identity is constructed by the individual in everyday practices. This is not simply a case of adding a new identity to the old (Block 2010) but it is an ongoing struggle where the individual has to negotiate their identity across a range of different social situations. In the above example, Suri feels that his choice of friends who can support him is limited in the UK. It would seem that there is a potential for 'ambivalence' within the peer support network, where there is the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart by the individual. This forms the basis of a 'situative self-construction' (Kraus 2000), where the individual situates himself within this particular social situation.

The peer group acts as a social structure which can constrain the amount and scope of choice available to individuals (Block 2010). Although the peer group is not fixed indefinitely, it does provide a basis for many of the day to day activities. There is evidence to suggest that there are limits to the agency of individuals in terms of peer support networks and their identity work. Carl, Asash and Suri felt 'they were stuck with the Indians'. This is reflected in Carl's interview, where he referred to a small area of the Business School as 'little India'.

However, this was not the experience shared by all of the participants:

> I have one Russian, Romanian girl I don't have any British friends, because we don't have (sic). They are all international otherwise all classmates are our friends, Nigerian and French. They help too! (Beauty)

Work Colleagues

Work colleagues can act as a means of support for new or existing work colleagues. A work space can provide opportunities for gaining knowledge from others and in

some cases making friends. Nearly all of the participants undertook some kind of casual work where there would be contact with work colleagues.

Participants did not find their causal employment environment conducive to building a friendly or social relationship, and they felt excluded from perceived collegial groups (see Chapter six for further discussion). The nature of their work visa restricted the number of hours they could work, and the zero hours nature of their employment contract was not necessarily conducive to building relationships with colleagues.

Participants anticipated that their work environment would be an opportunity to meet people and develop supportive relationships, as they were new to the organisation (see Chapters 5 & 6 for further discussion). Volet and Ang (1998) suggest that perceptions of each other and the 'other' can be expelled by the active experience of working together. In support of this, 'contact theory' suggests that friendship between members of different groups is one form of contact that helps dissolve inter-group conflict (Allport 1954; Everett 2013). Although these support networks are external to the university campus setting, there is support to suggest that both the internal and external environment are key factors that influence the level of satisfaction and well-being among international students (Arambewela & Hall 2013).

Summary

The individual and relational aspects of the identity work of these students are important considerations when exploring the international student experience.

Firstly, the discussion on the individual theme of identity highlights the range of experiences that these individuals had and how their identity changed over time, and how some individuals felt they were coping better than others.

Secondly, these students recounted their identity work in their experiences with family, friends and peers. Friendship patterns and family support influenced students' well-being and processes of intercultural adaptation. Although work colleagues can act as a means of support, they did not feature during the first few interviews, as many of the students in this research project were not employed until six months after they arrived.

Where individuals did refer to the relational aspect of their work environment, it was described as challenging and that support varied.

Peer support networks did create a sense of belonging for the individual, but simultaneously they also created a sense of ‘being apart’ or ‘being stuck’, which emphasised some of the constraints on the agency of some individuals.

Chapter Four has discussed the individual and relational themes associated with the identity of international students. Chapter Five will focus on the remaining organisational and societal themes as confirmed in the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE: ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIETAL THEMES

Introduction

In the previous chapter we discussed the individual and relational aspects of identity work of the seven Indian international students who were studying abroad for the first time.

In this chapter we will discuss the two remaining themes of the students' identity work, which are organisational and societal. Organisational-related issues include academic integration, social integration and academic support within the university. These will be discussed first to provide insights into the international student experience on campus and how this impacts on an individual's identity.

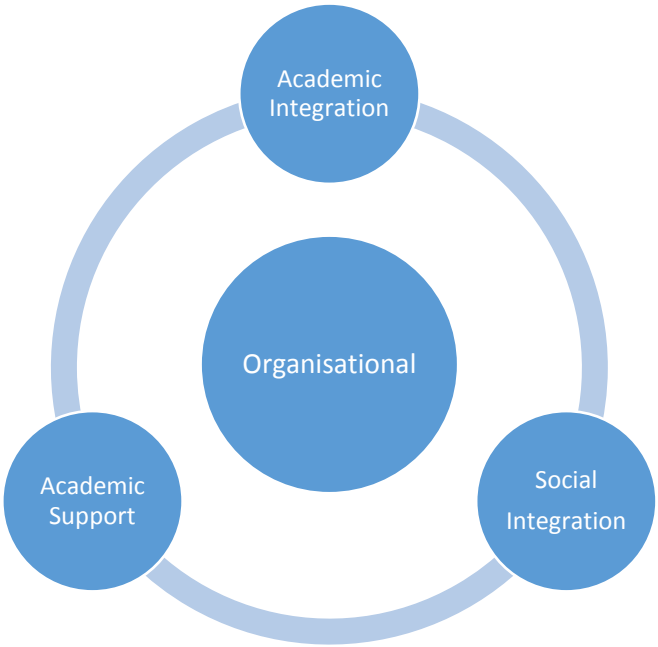
The second part of the chapter will discuss the fourth and final theme, which is the 'societal theme', which comprises of cultural learning, perceived discrimination and future MBA identity and employment. The societal theme provides further insights into the international student experience off-campus, and that, moreover, off-campus social interactions are a source of identity construction.

Theme Three: Organisational

Organisations are social settings which act as a source of identity work (Alvesson and Wilmott 2002). The organisational nature of identity work incorporates issues which relate to the university culture and/or structure, whilst other issues may relate to the broader educational cultures of learning and teaching.

Several organisational issues arose from the individual accounts of the international student experience on campus. These are: academic integration, social integration and academic support (see Figure 5.1). These experiences constitute the 'organisational theme'.

Figure 5.1 Sub-categories of the Organisational Theme



Academic Integration

Becoming an international student requires the successful transition from one education system into another, but simultaneously traversing the wider cultural differences outside of the classroom in the wider organisational setting and beyond. Any understanding of such learners in academic contexts necessarily requires a broader understanding of their identities (Hawkes 2014).

Academic integration was identified as a source of identity work, where a student is required to adjust to a new academic culture. The students had no previous experience of studying abroad, and in many circumstances relied on a sense of self that had been acquired in their previous educational experiences. Adjustment to an 'independent learner' identity was varied amongst the students in the research, and created challenges for each student.

The integration of an international student into a different learning environment abroad can be challenging for the individual (Ward et al 2001; Jin & Cortazzi 1998; Caruana & Spurling 2006; Ryan 2005; Guo & ven der Heijden 2008; Reece and Walker 2006). The students came from an education system which was different to the teaching and

learning environment in the UK; during their interviews, each of them talked about the challenges they faced throughout their studies. Cultural differences regarding teaching and learning included adopting different ways of studying and developing different skills to cope with new forms of assessment and teaching. Despite the challenges of the new academic culture, one student described this experience as 'setting him free'. He felt 'less restricted' when researching a topic for his assessment as compared to being assessed by examinations own country. Meanwhile, another student described 'struggling all the way' through her studies as she did not pass some of her assessments.

Previous and On-going Identity Work

The perceived success of managing the transition from one academic culture to another is an important part of the identity work of these international students. This research has shown that this is an on-going process for the students up to and including the completion of their dissertation thesis. The data revealed that academic integration is an important aspect of a student's identity work. The process of academic integration at the individual level provides the individual with an opportunity to reflect on previous learning, as well as their management of the challenges of becoming 'a learner within a new learning environment' (Day and Hajj 1986 in Poyrazli and Grahame 2007).

Students referred to previous identity work as undergraduates in India during their transition into the new culture. Previous identity work acted as a resource to deal with the challenges of their identity work abroad, and as a means of revising and maintaining their sense of self. This included, for example, revisiting previous educational experiences, revisiting academic achievements, subject knowledge or previous skills. This was a continuous process throughout their academic studies as the students managed both old and new identities.

Suri referred to his previous identity work as a student in India. Suri described himself as 'a successful Business major, and General Secretary of the Student Union'. His previous identity work also included how he interacted with faculty staff in India. Initially, he thought that his previous undergraduate business education would help him integrate more easily into his postgraduate Business course in the UK:

> It is the next level; I have learnt more, my previous studies helped me. Gives importance to me, it has value. I used to call my professor in India to tell them the BBA helps prepare for MBA. (Suri).

The temporary nature of identity work is highlighted where Suri realises he has to revise his approach to learning, and that it was not suited to the new culture. The assessment strategies in his previous education were familiar to him and therefore a source of comfort:

> I had to work on my own [laughs]. I had to even where I couldn't understand anything. I had to read the same thing 10 times to understand what the author is trying to say and go through it and then give my interpretation. So that is one thing that helps me a lot being independent (Suri).

In contrast, Nia found herself using a similar strategy to cope with her studies in the UK. Her identity as 'an independent learner' that was required in the new culture was underpinned by peer support. During her interview she explained that, in India, she had sought the help of her seniors at her university. Nia used her social network to identify other Indian students who would be familiar with this cultural practice and who would be able to help her:

> It is totally different system. In my engineering degree I gave always (sic) exams, took exams, written exams. There were no exams here was [err] quite difficult for me to adapt to this kind of education system. I took help from [err] my seniors, I took know how, to write assessments and how to do referencing and do things and I also need some books and [err] I have to write assessments so it was new for me. (Nia)

Social support from friends has an important role in international students' adjustment process (Yusof and Chelliah 2010; Ballarn & Clanchy 1997). For these students, the adjustment process was assisted through social support from friends and peers, who also acted as a network of both moral and academic support available to them within the new culture.

Differences between educational systems

Previous learning styles in India on undergraduate degrees such as Engineering, Business or Computing, involved students using one textbook upon which to focus their reading; examinations simply extracted information and rote learned from a textbook. Each of the students struggled with the sheer number of books they had to read, and the expectation to subsequently formulate their own opinion on what they had read.

Carl welcomed his new 'independent learner identity'. He saw the new academic environment as 'a source of liberation', as he felt he had been restricted in terms of what he could think in his previous undergraduate studies in India:

> So they actually you know, tutors let us explore what we want to explore. You know our own sort research and study and it is different and it is good actually. I rather call it easy because you have your own free-hand you have your own time to research. They set us free, we can actually do it the way we want, end of the day (sic) we need to justify it. (Carl)

The identity ascribed to students in their previous educational system in India is one of a 'passive learner'. The students in the research were not familiar with an 'independent learner' identity in which they were required to work independently on research topics using a number of different sources and develop ideas about what they had read. The fluid and fragmented nature of identity work meant that this new identity was both rewarding and challenging, and it offered opportunities for further identity work.

Furthermore, the students had not previously experienced group work as a classroom activity and were more familiar with being asked questions directly by the teacher. Group working skills can assist academic adjustment, as group members share their understanding of the task and topic. Group work is an opportunity for on-going identity work. Nari's account of her study abroad shows that she felt there was a need to revise her international student identity to incorporate the skills and behaviour required for group work:

> In this Masters' I need to talk more because I'm going onto the better position (sic). In classrooms, teacher, faculties are asking questions. I need to answer them. We need to talk more, so this is the different thing. I haven't done group work before either. Actually when I was doing my

> schooling, tuition in India we were doing individually work, and now we are [err] doing many subjects in group work. (Nari)

Group work is also seen as a means of personal and professional development by employers and universities. For example, Robin felt that as a postgraduate student he and his peers were encouraged to express their own views within a group situation. When reflecting on his own experience as an international student, he felt that he was able to reflect more on his own work experience and give an informed view within a classroom discussion. Robin saw this not simply as professional development, but of personal benefit to him:

> It's MBA degree we should go to real life people and say no sometimes you are right sometimes you are wrong and put our own thoughts and say okay, this can be done in certain circumstances and this cannot be done. So that is a good thing we can learn. Learn to express views. (Robin)

Family Obligations

Teaching and learning styles, cultural values and tradition affect the adjustment of international students (Ballard & Clanchy 1991). Academic adjustment models have previously incorporated a number of factors such as cultural values, but family obligations do not appear to form an explicit part of the academic adjustment process in terms of how they impact on international student identity.

Within this research, the findings suggest that family obligations did impact upon the academic integration and adjustment of the individual within the new academic environment. In the following example, the 'cultural identity' of the international student as well as her marital status was at the forefront of her identity work around family members and her academic adjustment.

In the following example, Nari had to juggle family obligations as well as her studies. Her identity work revealed demands on her time that were unique to her cultural identity and marital status. Her husband had travelled with her to the UK and was funding their living expenses through a full-time job. She was the only married female student within her class, she commuted for over one hour each day and was expected

to cook and clean for both her husband and her aunt. She felt that her cultural obligations to these family members meant that she was unable to spend adequate time studying and preparing for her assessments:

> "Because I am [err] not getting so much time for studies, I am not getting good marks". (Nari)

Not all students experienced the same constraints on academic adjustment as Nari. For example, during term time some students returned home for up to two weeks during for family weddings or other celebrations. Organisational regulations were in place in terms of attendance and students were able to apply for authorised absences.

However, such trips temporarily disrupted the pace of academic adjustment for some students, where they experienced difficulties in re-entering the academic environment. The identity work revealed that students were expected to return to India for family celebrations. In some cases this disrupted the academic adjustment process of the individual in real terms, as this impacted on the study time available to study or prepare for assessments. Having returned to the UK after attending his brother's wedding, Suri found himself in difficulties with his studies:

> Only had 4 days left. I wanted to score high in this assessment because I had specialised in Finance in India. I couldn't remember the work from classes and writing was difficult so I was confused. (Suri)

An individualised account of study abroad such as this highlights the individual balancing of a sense of here and now between the two cultures. A recent visit home to India to meet family obligations impacted directly on the individual's sense of self and well-being on his return to his studies in the UK. Academic integration cannot therefore be considered in isolation from family obligations.

On and off-campus

It was evident from each of the student's identity work that they had to learn to cope with new forms of assessment and learning experiences to maintain their 'new academic identity'. The identity work undertaken by an international student is both dynamic and on-going, and it is not limited to simply classroom or organisational

situations. Events inside the class affect those outside and vice versa, and therefore influence academic adjustment (Bacon 2002; Hung and Hung 2010). During her first interview such as the weather, language and homesickness, all of which she found difficult:

> Yes its bit (sic) cold until March until February its bit cold, so I have to wear so many clothes and all. So umm I got few colds and everything, and some illness then I used to (sic) that weather in UK. So then [err] the English. First I didn't understand to be honest I didn't understand anything. Its difficult accent and all. I didn't understand anything, then. And studies, also I felt were a little hard to refer to so many books and all. (Beauty)

Beauty revealed that had she had to cope with the demands of academic integration as well as simultaneously managing wider socio-cultural issues which both impacted on her sense of well-being and ability to cope.

Summary

When considering the identity work of the Indian students who took part in this research project, it is important to acknowledge how an individual's academic adjustment, academic support and social integration impacts on this on-going process. Academic identity for international students is grounded within a complex mix of the university culture and structure, as well as differences in broader educational systems such as cultures of learning and teaching. The organisational nature of identity work incorporated experiences in and outside of the classroom. This meant that students did not describe their academic integration in isolation from wider social and cultural experiences such as homesickness, the weather, accommodation costs, support from friends and family and social integration with other students.

Social Integration

Social integration is a process of learning and familiarisation of the parameters of a new environment (Anderson 1994). The process of social integration can be 'a lonely journey' where the individual is constantly in a process of self-reflection, self-rejection,

negotiation and mediation of cultural norms, behaviours and values (Gu 2005). It can be argued, therefore, that social integration can be a critical and difficult aspect of adjustment, particularly where an individual is trying to develop a social network. Students in previous studies have reported that loneliness and the fear of not 'fitting in' kept them preoccupied until an acceptable level of stability in the social domain was achieved (Tompson and Tompson 1996).

Engagement with others and different groups of people impacts on the lives of students and acts as an important part of their international student identity. The identity work of each student illustrates their own unique experiences of social integration and where different levels of social integration were achieved.

Social integration within an organisational setting includes the negotiation of structural factors for the individual. These findings suggest that structural issues such as the diversity of the student cohort at Masters' level influenced the nature of social integration. The students in this research were from a cohort which possessed little diversity. In addition, the size of this particular cohort meant that students were able to identify with classmates easily. The small size of the cohort encouraged one student to refer to all of the students in her class as 'her friends'. For others, social integration on campus meant studying alongside peers who possessed previous work experience. Robin, for example, found it quite easy to meet people within his own cohort, and he felt that the other students were friendly.

> They are friendly, they have some work experience so they know how to mingle. So they were gentle, casual […]. They did some good things, so no worry (sic) about that. (Robin)

Organisational issues did impact on the perceived opportunities to integrate in the wider postgraduate community. At the time of the research, the opportunities for integration between the January and September cohorts relied on the resourcefulness of the individual. International students were able to meet up, but this often meant that this was a result of chance meetings in student-populated study areas such as the library.

A level of agency was demonstrated by individual students who were able to integrate more easily than others into the small postgraduate community within the Business School. New friendships, for example, enabled Asash to extend his social network to the September cohort of Masters' students, but during his interview he did stress that his extended network of friends were mainly Indian:

> The majority of my friends are from the January intake. [arr] so [err] more the Indian friends,[err] apart from the classes what we does is we [err] once in a day we have meal together, no matter where it is. It might be at their place or my place, we sit, we cook together, we eat together, and we play sometimes together. We go to the countryside to play cricket or we go to the student support centre to play badminton, and then in the evenings if we are in the mood we go out to a party. (Asash)

Although a level of social integration into the postgraduate community was achieved, Asash was puzzled as to why he could only get to know half of the students in the previous cohort and why there were no Europeans in his personal social network:

> I really don't know, I wondered why this […] but it is still a puzzle for me and I don't understand it. (Asash)

Factors affecting social integration

At the time of the research, social integration within the postgraduate community relied on informal mechanisms similar to the one discussed above. Although social events were organised for international students across the university, participants within this research did not refer to any of these particular events. Instead, their identity work referred to social events they organised themselves such as cooking together, studying together or partying together:

> Yeah, friends from the MBA course. [Err], most of them are Indians, they are very friendly and used (sic) to cook together used to eat together, err we like use (sic) do group studies, and err use do the assignments together. We sit in the library whole day and do it. It is very helpful also the friends and all. (Beauty)

It is suggested by Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2004) that extra-curricular activities can help individuals adjust to university life, where individuals socialise with other people outside of their course. The participants in this study did not refer to participation in any such activities in the first six months of their stay, and emphasised that academic achievement was valued over anything else. Any spare time was largely spent with students from their peer group in day to day activities which focused around their studies.

Commuting Distance

Commuting distance to university appears to be a factor in affecting social integration. Beauty and Nari were the only female students in the research who lived an hour away from the university and commuted by train on a daily basis. The remainder of the students lived close to the university in student accommodation and were able to access informal social gatherings more easily than Beauty and Nari. However, during their interviews, both Nari and Beauty revealed they had made acquaintances with students in their own cohort and Beauty had made friends with students in the previous cohort. Nari, who was married and who commuted the furthest to university, found it difficult to attend any of the parties that the students arranged, so she could only meet with other students between classes on campus. Nari felt that she was actually having a different experience in her study abroad when she compared herself to other

international students. Her family obligations in the UK and the distance to university prevented her from achieving the same level of social integration on campus:

> Yes it's different experience because I am married. I have to manage my husband, he is coming back [err] at two o'clock in afternoon and [err] at the time I [err] prepare food for him. I need to cook myself, and manage those things and then I need to study also. Every night I am going to my auntie's house and [err] (sic) preparing food for her. I miss my friends. They are staying here and doing parties and all that (Nari)

On arrival in the UK, Beauty had lived with her aunt and uncle in a town near the university. Her decision to move into student accommodation meant that she would be 'more independent' and spend more time with her new friends and experience university life in a different way. In this example, Beauty refers to friends not just in her own cohort of MBA students, but also in the earlier cohort who had started the previous September. She talked about some of the new places they had visited together:

> Yes! There are so many friends in the September batch. Yes recently we went to Blackpool, [mmm] on July 7th, with err we went 10 people, we went with 2 cars, it's very quiet nice experience to the beach, and we went to Blackpool and on our way we went to Sheffield, err then Liverpool and err Doncaster like (sic) enjoyed.(Beauty)

Social integration into university life meant that Beauty could revise and extend her identity as an international student and acquire new cultural experiences by travelling with friends. However, not all students were able to engage socially with other students from previous cohorts. Robin's identity work regarding social integration differed from that of Nari and Beauty because he preferred to study at home due to the distance he would have to travel from his accommodation to the university, despite living a shorter distance away:

> We used to do group studies but I don't get my timing (sic) and its long way. So I just, I do some with one of my friends and only one friend who I used to get on with, and get some ideas. And when I come here [university] I spend (sic) in the library and he say okay. I get idea from him. (Robin)

In the example above, social integration was seen as a means of developing relationships with other students to exchange ideas and experiences.

Academic Calendar:

Social interaction between cohorts was largely influenced by the different enrolment dates. Students from previous cohorts were organised with a different start and finish date within the academic calendar. They therefore left the university earlier than the January cohort to return home to their own countries, either to complete their dissertation or search for work. This meant that, for some students, friendship groups were dispersed after six months, which subsequently impacted on the type and frequency of social integration for each student. The January MBA students from the January cohort therefore had fewer opportunities for social integration with other Masters' students within the faculty of Business:

> Err last six months actually all are very busy and after the second semester they have moved to some other places most of the friends got job (sic) and err in London as well… Birmingham so most of them moved out from [redacted] I have some friends in the September batch and they have finished their dissertation and they have gone back to their country […] so actually we didn't hang around much in the last six months (Beauty).

Despite the bi-annual recruitment pattern acting as a barrier to the students on the September and January intakes, some students experienced a different level of social integration which was determined by their own personal values. Beauty's own identity work as an international student did not include British friends; it instead tended to focus on friendship patterns and social activities within her own small class of students. Although some of these new friends went out to parties, Beauty did not feel comfortable attending such events. During her interview Beauty did express an interest in wanting to have British friends, but she felt that this was not possible as she felt she could only meet British students in parties and clubs. Her friendship group was composed therefore from her classmates:

> Like err in the library and all (sic) and they visit to our place and if there are any birthday parties or something we get together and we go to parties like. So that's why maybe I have only class friends. Yes I like to make friends from England. But I didn't get chance because I am not a person who goes to parties and all. And my friends say if you come to parties and clubbing you make so many friends. (Beauty)

The above discussion suggests that there a range of factors which impact on the social integration of an international student on campus, which in turn influences the identity work of the individual. For those individuals who were faced with additional issues such as commuting distance, any social integration was made more difficult by the time constraints of travelling to and from the university, which created fewer opportunities to extend and enrich their social network. Some individuals demonstrated agency when developing their social network where they overcame structural issues such as the lack of diversity within the cohort. An over-reliance on informal mechanisms of integration meant that individuals were members of a social network that consisted of mono-cultural members.

Academic Support

The identity work of the individual student can be influenced through their engagement with the academic support that is available within the university. It is evident from this research that, although each of the students experienced difficulties adjusting to the new academic environment, their individual accounts of their identity work made no reference to the specialist language support available within the university. Academic support was available to students in addition to their timetabled classes, such as help with writing assessments, creating power-point presentations and referencing. Students appeared to search for academic support from written feedback from tutors and help from other classmates, or alternatively they simply struggled and did not seek further help. During their interviews, therefore, students appeared to respond to the academic support in varying degrees and in different ways.

One student referred to a ‘trial and error’ strategy she adopted in response to a lack of understanding of the study skills that were required. She described how her formative assessment results helped clarify whether the work she had produced was of an appropriate standard. Negotiating self-refection and self-rejection were part of her individual adjustment process:

> …[err] then they say you name (sic) to do the assignment and you have to use this books and everything, so err first I felt it’s was very hard, I used to read so many books I used to refer, after I got good results for the first semester then I thought ok. (Beauty)

However, Nari described herself as struggling with every assessment throughout the whole of her MBA. She felt she needed academic support from both her classmates and her module tutors in order to overcome some of the difficulties preparing for seminars and assessments. Despite the academic support accessed by Nari, this support did not alleviate her worries about failing as a student. Her perceived failure underpinned her identity work. She experienced a loss of confidence in her ability to pass her assessments; in the example below she repositions her identity in terms of her own lack of intelligence:

> So it is, I'm really worried about that. I'm worried about my result. I'm not much intelligent (sic) because I am worried because I am getting less marks, in every subject. (Nari)

Unlike Nari, Beauty felt she had benefitted from the support from academic tutors, particularly where she had not performed so well in some assessments. The academic support given by module tutors in Semesters A and B underpinned Beauty's identity work during her dissertation stage. She felt that she had made progress and was able to build upon the knowledge she had gained from tutors earlier in the MBA programme:

> It's very much helped with my dissertation and [err, err] with structure, and how to do the proper referencing bibliography and writing style, grammar and English and proper (sic) – how to construct in sentence properly and mm then the knowledge from the first semester and second semester subjects I have got really good knowledge from those subjects and it is really helping me doing this dissertation, proper way now. (Beauty)

Academic Support: dissertation supervision

In their accounts of their study abroad, students referred to the availability of staff as an important factor in shaping their identity work. The perceived relevance and responsiveness of academic staff during the dissertation stage was a prominent feature in the research.

The challenges associated with successful completion of a Masters' dissertation is somewhat softened where a student has previously undertaken an undergraduate dissertation. Previous identity work for these participants did not include the

completion of a dissertation, and they felt overly reliant on the direction and feedback provided by their dissertation supervisor:

> Err….] that was [err….] absolutely a new experience, difficult of course. I, I had no idea what the target was and what the end result is going to be. So you are absolutely freezed (sic) and paused. You don't know how to proceed further. (Carl)

The formal allocation of the dissertation supervisor, the availability of the supervisor and the frequency of supervisor feedback to the student impacted on how the student saw themselves as coping with this aspect of their study abroad. The date of allocation of a supervisor was problematic for some, but not all, of the students. Some students saw the supervisor allocation process as 'quite late' in their studies; this would mean less time to complete their studies for those wanting to submit their dissertation within a 6-month period and return home to their country. It is not suggested that academic integration be considered in isolation here, as there are personal decisions that the individual undertakes which impact on their international student identity. For example, during his interview Asash reflects on his choice of data collection, his overall research design and the pre-booked ticket back to India. He saw each of these as contributing factors to a feeling of 'not coping' and being under pressure to meet the six-month deadline. However, he suggests that this is not the experience of all the students in his cohort:

> Because we (sic) the January batch, we were a bit late to have started with that dissertation finally decided what topic we were going to work on. And [err] even the allocation of the supervisors were not confirmed until the last minute. We lost around about a month. But there were people regardless of the fact who had started as they were confident. (Asash)

Staff annual leave also impacted on the identity work of the students. Organisational issues such as staff annual leave compounded the feeling of 'not coping' for some students. Prior to the final submission date, the final draft stage of the dissertation coincided with a period of statutory public holidays. For one student, this was particularly difficult, as he felt he could not progress any further on his dissertation draft until he had received supervisor's feedback:

> The cause of the stress is because you have a target date when you have to hand your work and on the other hand you are always stuck with your research most of the time. You know things are moving very slowly. (Carl)

In response to the limited availability of academic staff over the Christmas period, a decision was taken by the Programme Leader to offer an extension to the final assessment submission date. Moreover, an individual account of study abroad is important as it reveals the academic, cultural and personal factors that affect the identity work of the student at this time. Here we see the intersectionality of the four dimensions of identity. The individual, organisational and relational aspects of Suri's identity are more predominant, as he felt that the offer of an extension to the submission deadline did not alleviate the problem of balancing his dissertation completion, returning home to his family and the availability of his supervisor.

> Again the same process was to go on the whole month, very difficult. And around about that I had to complete it by 2nd February because I had booked a flight back to India by (sic) 3rd. (Suri).

The dissertation process is an important part of the identity work of these international students. The individual accounts provided by students show them positioning themselves within a range of temporary identities which emphasised varying levels of stress and, at times, a lack of progression. Although identities of 'failing' or 'not coping' can be temporary by these students, these identities were not sustained throughout their study abroad and therefore led to varying degrees of feeling able to cope with the academic demands of their Masters' programme. A sense of community was fostered amongst these students within this particular cohort through their shared experiences of the dissertation process:

> The thing was [umm] the dissertation we had to progress, chapter by chapter. The chapter I was stuck, almost everybody was stuck in the literature review because that was the main anchor off dissertation. (Suri)

Academic support: perceived cultural differences

Finally, it is important to note the importance of perceived cultural differences regarding academic support which were apparent within the experiences of these international students. Expectations of academic support within the new culture

constitute an important indicator of the cultural differences between educational systems that the individual has to traverse. During one interview, a student recalled telling his family about the support you can expect to receive, and how different it is from India:

> So, sometimes it, if you are facing […] the university with help you out. But that doesn't happen in India so they were actually shocked when they heard this because [umm] in India people don't tell. (Suri)

Moreover, the identity work of international students supports the view that academic support is an organisational process which is culturally situated (see above example). An individual may not feel comfortable with new practices of academic support which are unfamiliar to them. In this example, the individual attaches cultural values to the nature and extent of academic support, which may encourage other students to shy away from sharing problems with tutors when they are faced with personal/academic issues.

Summary

The organisational nature of identity work incorporates issues which relate to the university culture and/or structure, whilst other issues relate to the broader educational cultures of learning and teaching.

The personal accounts of study abroad provided by the individuals in this research suggest that the organisational dimension of identity is not dominant throughout the study abroad period. Academic integration, social integration and academic support are multi-faceted, and they form an important part of the student's identity work. The individualised accounts show students positioning themselves within a range of temporary identities throughout their academic studies, which supports the view that identity is both temporary and that it changes over time.

Theme Four: Societal

Study abroad is referred to here in its broadest sense and includes the experiences that international students may have whilst off campus. Interaction with wider society may include daily activities such as shopping, eating out at restaurants or opening a bank account. It may also include aspirations that the student may have to casual employment within the local community and/or post-MBA employment in the UK or abroad. These can present unfamiliar social cues that the individual is unaccustomed to managing.

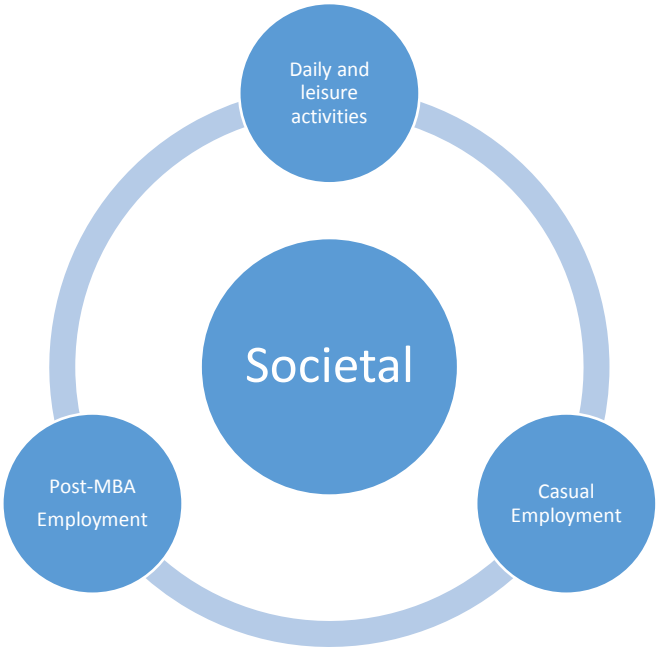
It has been acknowledged in previous research that acculturation in a new culture is important (Ward et al 2009; Kagan and Cohen 1990; Epstein and Gang 2010; Hugo 2005 and Patron 2007). A traditional view of acculturation is where the individual is seen as passive; by contrast, a more contemporary view is where an individual is actively engaging in and shaping acculturation outcomes (Ward et al 2009). The acculturation process inherently incorporates identity work for the individual. The finite period of study abroad can lead to aspects of marginality from wider society as the student is often immersed in foreign surroundings that are unfamiliar to them (Wesley 2012).

Individual accounts of social interactions within wider society reveal the experiences of students in terms of how they cope, and the impact of these interactions on their identity work. For example, an enclave of family members or a mono-cultural group of students can influence the acculturation process of an individual. An enclave could consist of family members who reside in the host culture, as was the experience of Nari and Beauty. Although Patron (2007) suggests that it is easier for individuals to acculturate if they have family members residing in the host country, as they act as ‘a broker of cultural learning’ which can impede or shape cultural learning within everyday activities. Similarly, this process can occur as a member of a mono-cultural group who share their experience and knowledge of wider society on a frequent basis, as was the case for Asash, Robin, Nia, Suri, and Carl.

The aspirational identity of post-MBA work in the UK or India acted as enablers of the acculturation process in this study. Students were willing to undertake casual employment within the new labour market to improve their prospects of securing employment upon graduation. Everyday experiences, and in some cases feelings of vulnerability, re-shaped their identities to varying degrees.

The 'societal theme' of identity as illustrated in Figure 5.2 incorporates social interactions within wider society. These include daily and leisure activities, casual employment and post-MBA employment. The discussion that follows is organised around these three sub-categories and will highlight the identity work of the students.

Figure 5.2 Sub-categories of Societal Theme



Daily and Leisure activities

Study abroad is an opportunity for cultural learning and engagement within wider society. Daily activities such as shopping, visiting the local bank and eating out at restaurants are all social situations within which cultural learning can occur. Such activities often reveal differences in cultural norms or values for the individual, and can require them to revise or maintain their identity work.

The students that participated in this research experienced varying levels of interaction with the local community or wider society, and consequently their cultural learning varied. Where an individual chooses to separate themselves from the foreign environment and place more emphasis on the country of origin they are likely to avoid social interactions in the new culture where they feel uncomfortable. International students experience difficulty when the local community is perceived to possess a mixture of values, behaviours and self-expression that are difficult to reconcile with their own traditions (Birbaum et al 2012). For example, Robin chose to live in private accommodation with fellow Indians because he felt it would be more familiar to him, and he would not need to change his lifestyle:

> I live with other Asians in private accommodation with them […]… living with foreigners or something like that, they are feeling something odd to me(sic) and I am feeling something odd to them (sic) [ ] I can't establish wider network because of cultural restriction, would have [ ] change lifestyle... (Robin)

His leisure activities largely consisted of time at home with his housemates chatting, and so leisure pursuits within wider society were constrained by his individual and cultural preferences. Spending his leisure time at a pub was not an option for him, and he preferred not to enter into conversations with males or females from the new culture, as he found these social activities uncomfortable. He was therefore able to maintain his heritage culture through his own actions, but unable to increase intergroup relations in the new culture (Searle & Ward 1990; Ward and Rana-Deuba 1999). This ultimately impacted upon the nature of his integration. There is evidence to suggest that students manage their identity work in between two contrasting societies. This very process creates tensions for them, and requires effort to manage and, as a result, impacts on the (re)construction of their identities:

> The main thing I saw is that 'independent', more freedom, they are using in the wrong way (sic) or something like that. For example the boys talking to a girl, and some nights […] without the parents' permission […] we are having some restrictions. It is their culture and I don't want to change. It's not possible to change, it's for me to […] back to my limit. (Robin)

In contrast, other students who had a desire to experience different cultural activities spent some of their leisure time in local bars or restaurants where other students and

locals met each other. Carl saw the bars as a means of 'intercultural learning' where he could interact with non-Indians and learn new things:

> You just think what am I doing here, or what am I doing with those people when I could do more things? I could learn a lot more things and cultures. I can meet and do happy talks all the way through the day. In my society people (sic) everyone influence your life through their own thoughts or ways. Here I don't see that, people experimenting with someone else's life and like you're my friend you should do this and you should do that. (Carl)

He expressed concerns about how other Indian males wanted to place restrictions on how you act in the new culture. This supports the view that spending more time with home country nationals may lead to less satisfying and less culturally-engaging experiences (Pederson et al 2011). Carl used his study abroad to revise his international student identity by distancing himself from co-nationals in order to acquire different views on life.

Contact with the host community is important because it can promise a route to improving language and host cultural knowledge, which in turn facilitate successful adjustment in the new culture (Ward et al 2001). An individual's motivation can influence the extent to which and the choice of social activities they engage in. However, research suggests that the receptiveness of the host community is an important consideration (Epstein and Gang 2006; Pederson et al 2011). Ward (2006) suggests that the wider society provides the major point of contact for host nationals. It would seem that maintaining an international student identity outside of the university setting can, however, be a struggle for an individual when engaging in daily or leisure activities:

> There are a lot of differences it's not like it is in our country. They're not you know very what, how to put this very [ ], they don't find it nice to see people like us around the city. If we are walking down the high street or anywhere it's not that they are looking past me, not smile (sic). If you smile, they not smile back. [Err] it's not exactly racial comments or like that or that sort, it's not like that. It's not [err], they don't fancy [err] around the city much. (Asash)

Whilst students endeavour to use their study abroad opportunities to engage with the local host community individuals, they nevertheless felt that life off-campus was more

difficult. There is evidence to suggest that the students had to manage the power differentials between themselves and the host community with whom they wished to engage. Dominelli (2002) argues that we cannot underestimate the nature of the dominant-subordinate interactive process that involves 'othering, exclusion acceptance and negotiation'. One student reported that he had been called 'a foreigner' in the street:

> I have, have [err] noticed people commenting on me from pretty far. Those are small things that you have to ignore. (Carl)

Inter-group conflict between the students and the local host community escalated to a situation where a group of international students were intimated and racially abused in the street by a group of locals:

> They started from there you know swearing on (sic) us you know. And on that moment they are actually shouting oh [err] yes but we know we just have to walk straight and ignore because [argh] They were swearing on us but [argh] it's a long distance from there to high street where we used to live. We did try to make them realise we are only students, we are not going to eat up your jobs, we are here to study. We are doing our studies and we will go back, that is all we are here for. (Asash)

Asash reported that after this particular incident it affected the way he and his friends engaged with social situations off-campus. They were more cautious about where they went in the city, avoided travelling alone whenever possible and avoided being out at night:

> I have noticed a lot of difference in me and the girls who are with us. We do not go out at nights at all. (Asash)

It is evident that their identity work as international students was revised as a result of this particular encounter. Subsequently they retreated to their homes where they felt safer and spent their leisure time visiting each other. This decision reinforced their exclusion from certain social activities off campus and acted as a barrier to further identity re (construction).

Casual Employment

Casual employment was seen as an important part of the identity work of these international students. The participants saw casual employment as a means of securing post-MBA employment either in the UK or India. Initially, they felt confident that they would be able to secure jobs which were of a similar status to those roles they had undertaken in India. Office work or managerial jobs were regarded by the students as appropriate roles to match previous experience. Unable to find such jobs in the local area, they were forced to re-think their potential employment position within the local labour market and to negotiate identities as temporary low-skilled employees:

> Last seven or eight months we are not able to you know squeeze in a job which is you know, good enough. So when I [ ] the pay and it's not stable, it's not stable. Its temporary work! Yeah we are looking for temporary work. We need work which, would be there for six months and not like when we need we call you. Yeah very temporary work, they might call us once in a week for a couple of hours. (Asash)

Our own identities are re-shaped by our experiences and relationships with other people and by our feelings of self-worth (Wesley 2012). Previously Robin had a considerable amount of responsibility, working as an assistant manager for a shipping company back in India. His revised identity in the new culture was that of a zero hour contract worker in a local corner shop:

> My friend actually [here] has an off-licence shop so whenever he [argh] needs or asks me to pop in for him, they are friendly guy (sic)… Some customers [err] they are hard. (Robin)

Casual employment is an opportunity to interact with others from the local community. The participants in this research all reported difficulty in obtaining local employment, and for some individuals this process took nearly eight months. Intercultural learning is defined 'as an ability to interact sensitively and competently across cultural contexts as both an immediate and long-term effect of exchange' (Bennett 2009:2). There were few opportunities for intercultural learning for those students who worked in shops, as they described their experience of working with colleagues as difficult.

However, there is some evidence to suggest that casual employment opportunities provide a means for an individual to get to know more about cultural norms, behaviour and values – which then in turn influenced their identity work at this societal level. Nia took a job as a nanny with a local family, where she gained first-hand experience of English family life, finding it strange that some English mothers work full-time. She valued the opportunity to speak with the school teachers each day and other people who collected schoolchildren from the same school class. She felt that the benefits were two-fold. Firstly, she found that such exposure helped boost her confidence in understanding the accents of the locals and helped her to become accustomed to how to speak to them:

> I wanted a job I could manage things, a job which would be very beneficial to me, [err] but I did not get any. So also this was with me (sic) so I thought, okay let's do it I will get some experience. I have to take care of two kids. The parents they just go off to work. So [err] I have to take care of those kids. So yeah it was great exposure for me, […] joining there. Every day I have to communicate with many people, so just improve my communication skills and [err] just yeah how to work in this environment. (Nia)

Secondly, her job helped her learn first-hand about the different cultural norms of family life. These norms included how birthdays are typically celebrated, what television programs English families watch, or how English people spent their leisure time. She also had to manage the differences between 'English' traditions and a way of life that she was more familiar with in India. These aspects included the obligations of a married woman in India which extends beyond that of the husband and includes his family, as well as the perceived lack of cultural restrictions on English women, whether married or single:

> Role of women is different. Women are free here. I can explore myself here and live my life in my own way. (Nia)

The knowledge gained from studying, living and working in the UK as a nanny alongside her studies appeared to influence Nia's identity work. Evidence suggests that it shaped some of her lifestyle choices and beliefs. She saw life in England as offering her a different way of living and the opportunity 'to live and work independently'; she intended to explore the possibly of living and working in the UK for a further two years before returning to India.

Post-MBA employment (the UK and India)

Post-MBA employment, whether in the UK or India, underpinned the identity work of all of the students who participated in this research. Findings within this research show how students endeavour to use the study-abroad opportunity and to achieve more than academic success. Their engagement (or efforts to try to engage) with casual post-MBA employment opportunities in the wider society provided good examples of this.

International students who had completed their Masters' qualification in 2010 were eligible for a Post Study Work visa (PSW). This meant they could undertake employment for up to two years inside the UK. Without the PSW visa, students would have had to return to India after their studies. The importance of obtaining a PSW visa and securing appropriate work experience abroad meant that their job prospects as future managers would be enhanced when they returned to India.

Carl's efforts to engage with post-MBA employment in the UK could be regarded as further identity work. He had always aspired to work in the UK after graduation, and he was an active agent in his pursuit of employment. Daniels and Brooker (2014) suggest that 'the individual is actively engaged in constructing, and taking ownership of, their state of readiness to begin work'. His enthusiasm to begin work in the UK after graduation was curtailed by his failure to achieve a pass grade in his dissertation. He was unable to complete a PSW visa application which would support his future identity work as a post-MBA professional in the UK:

> So, as with me everything was set I was applying for jobs, I was getting a couple of replies, professional jobs, I am talking about proper MBA jobs. And now since I have failed everything has just crashed for the moment, and I guess my visa was depending on MBA. I cannot apply for PSW. I cannot get a job. [ ]..I know it is not possible to stay in this country for one year. (Carl)

Not all students wanted to remain in employment in the UK after they completed their studies. Robin indicated that he wanted to return to India to improve his job prospects. This evidence supports the findings of Osborne (2012), where an individual negotiates

their own transition to the person they want to become in order to achieve their goals. Robin believed that international exposure from working abroad as well as gaining a British MBA would put him at an advantage on returning to India. He had seen how his friends' careers had benefitted from achieving an MBA abroad:

> If I got an offer, always I would prefer to go to India [err] I can see my culture, then [ ] we can go back to my country and then feel something, feel happy… You need to do something better than this current job so when you get an MBA you are one step ahead of others, and if you get an international MBA you are several steps ahead. (Robin)

Brooks et al (2012) suggest that overseas education can be seen as part of an individual's strategy to achieve distinction within the labour market. Study abroad opportunities can gain more than simply academic success for international students. Their engagement (or efforts to try to engage) with employment opportunities in the wider society provide good examples of this.

Post-MBA identity work is complex. Individuals continue to negotiate and manage their identities between two contrasting cultures. This very process creates tensions for the individual that they have to manage and, as a result, it impacts on the (re)construction of their identities. We cannot underestimate the significance of on-going relationship between these students and their family members during the transition period to employment. It is understood by both parties that a foreign MBA degree enhances an individual's employment prospects and subsequently future marriage opportunities. Students therefore need to negotiate cultural restrictions and their family's expectations of where they are to reside and when they are to marry as part of their identity work. They may frequently have to revise or maintain their international student identity. Throughout their study abroad, the parents of Nia and Beauty expected them to return home to India find a job and get married. They were aware of the expectations that they should marry within a year or so of graduating.

Both Nia and Beauty referred to the PSW visa application as symbolising further independence. They would not need to return home to India for a further two years, and could thereby defer their marriages. The transition to post-MBA employment

required careful negotiation with their parents, and highlights some of the tensions they had to resolve. Their desire for 'a more independent' identity had to be balanced alongside their parents' expectations of them:

> It is a big responsibility because [err] again, in our culture in India [umm] girls (sic). I mean they are considered the pride of your home and [err] its very different from here because in our country, girls [argh] generally they are not allowed to do love, marriage and how affairs (sic) and all that. So if I do anything wrong [err] as I have come out, it will definitely affect my other cousins and siblings. So that is why it is a big responsibility for me because, as I have to maintain the pride of my family and it [err] a big responsibility. (Nia)

Her identity work is further constrained by the finite period of exposure to the new culture, as she is aware that she will have to return to India to fulfil her parent's wishes:

> But now I think I should, I should explore more world (sic), because I don't know what will happen two years from now because obviously I will have to marry someone, I would have to live wherever my spouse would live I would have to go with them. So it is better, right now I am independent and I can live my life on my own, on my way. So I am thinking to stay here for two years. (Nia)

An important part of Nia's identity work was underpinned by her experience of being the first female in her family to study abroad. She felt that studying abroad is not an option for many females. As regards her own family, she felt that her experience abroad had created new possibilities for other females in her family to follow in her footsteps. Being the first such female in her family carried with it a responsibility to 'get it right'. Her new identity work as a post-MBA employee in England would therefore carry with it an expectation that she should honour cultural obligations. Study abroad is a means of forging a new identity, simultaneously drawing together what an individual has brought with them, and what they are learning in their new surroundings. They learn to reframe their self-understanding and view of society, whilst at the same time retaining the elements of their identity connected to their home culture (Wesley 2012:6).

These examples illustrate how students endeavour to use study abroad to engage with employment opportunities within wider society, and how such experiences impact on the identity work of the individual. Although study abroad offers an opportunity for the individual to revise or create new identity work, there is also evidence to suggest

that the female participants who were unmarried were able to make decisions that impacted on their future identity work as married women.

Summary

In this chapter we have discussed the organisational and societal themes that emerged from the individual's personal account of their study abroad.

In the first section, academic integration, time management and social integration were presented as sub-categories of the organisational theme. In the second section, the daily activities, leisure, casual employment and post-MBA employment were shown to form part of an individual's identity in terms of the interactions he or she had with wider society.

The organisational and societal themes are not presented here as being mutually exclusive, as they do overlap and change over time.

The following chapter will discuss how an individual's identity work is manifested and shaped in the interactions between the four dimensions of identity.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the original contribution of the societal dimension of international student identity.

The findings confirm that study abroad is a site of identity construction. A more holistic approach to international student identity considers the role of wider society and how this may impact on the individual. The societal dimension extends the literature by considering the impact that wider society may have on the experience of international students and their 'identity work'.

The first part of this chapter discusses the need for a more holistic approach to international identity in terms of the existing literature, and explores the societal dimension of international student identity. However, it is not suggested here that the societal dimension influences students' identity (re)construction in isolation from other factors; examples will be provided to demonstrate this.

A more detailed discussion will follow later in the chapter on how the four dimensions of identity interact and change over time. This discussion is organised using the following timeframes: Arrival; First Few Months; Dissertation Stage and Permanent Employment.

Beyond the University Campus: A Holistic Approach to International Student Identity

The challenges and adjustments that international students experience within the classroom are well established within the existing literature (Luzio-Lockett 1998; Caruana and Spurling; Ryan 2005; Robson and Turner 2006). Previously, emphasis had been placed on how the individual copes with the challenges of the new academic culture. This led to a much-needed emphasis on classroom management, staff development and more concerted efforts to integrate international students. Less emphasis was placed on the everyday lives of international students outside of the

university. This thesis represents a holistic approach to the international student experience. It achieves this by focusing on the 'identity work' of students both on and off campus. Moreover, the societal aspects of international student experience play an important part within the emergent identities of international students abroad. It is suggested here that the societal dimension cannot be considered in isolation of the individual, relational and organisational dimensions of identity. The examples provided throughout this chapter highlight how these four dimensions of identity interact.

It is worth noting that the site of this research is a new university in the Midlands which has a semi-rural location. Despite some short-term economic migration from the EU, the area has some diversity in terms of ethnicity, nationality or religion in the surrounding area.

The students who participated in this research reported that although they spent a lot of time on campus for study purposes throughout their stay, they lived off campus in private residential areas. This necessitated the participants travelling to university, shopping for food locally and socialising in areas which were not occupied solely by students.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a more dynamic view of the international student experience, drawing on the students' own stories of their everyday lives, and thus providing a more holistic view of international students. In doing so, the societal aspect of their study abroad emerges as an important area of research, alongside the individual, relational and organisational dimensions of identity. Although these particular international students regard themselves as 'temporary residents' residing within the UK, their everyday experience is shown to be an important part of their 'identity work'.

Previously, researchers developed useful theories on how individuals cope with living within a new culture. This body of research is referred to as 'acculturation theory' and is more commonly associated with theorists such as John Berry (2005). His research focused on the strategies available to an individual in terms of integrating into a new culture, sometimes referred to as "identity positions" (Bhui et al 2005). Ward (2008) conceptualises the acculturation process as a means of identity change. An individual

is able to alternate identities on the basis of the context in which they find themselves (Stuart and Ward 2011). For some, 'ethno-cultural conflict' is experienced (Ward 2008); this is where the individual experiences internal conflict and decides either to retain values or beliefs from the culture of origin or to revise them, which ultimately shapes the 'identity work' that the individual undertakes. The acculturation literature is useful in highlighting the experiences of migrants, but there is a need to capture the dynamic nature of the lived experience of acculturated individuals and their related identity issues (Stuart and Ward 2011).

Over the last decade, there has been an increasing interest on individual identity formation through the acculturation process in a new country (Block 2013; Norton and McKinney 2010; Schwartz et al 2006 and Brown et al 2007). Such developments enable more thought to be given to the questions of how society impacts on the individual, and how the individual is able to demonstrate 'agency' in terms of the challenges they face as they occupy identities such as 'foreigner', 'other' or 'stranger' within a new culture. It would seem, however, that such contributions are less well acknowledged in the international student literature. Although attempts have been made to combine the academic and broader socio-cultural aspects of everyday life for the individual (Montgomery 2010), these are not expressed in terms of how these experiences impact on individual student identity. Such an approach would capture the dynamic nature of study abroad and the 'identity work' of the individual.

For the individual, acculturation in the form of study abroad or employment abroad may mean opportunities for 'identity work' in terms of identity formation, identity maintenance and identity change. Forming and becoming a postgraduate student abroad incorporates a range of identity positions which are both temporary and dynamic. A holistic view of international student identity incorporates the wider societal aspects as well as the academic experience, which include individual, relational and organisational dimensions of identity. Such a view regards these experiences as spaces within which students undertake 'identity work'. This thesis supports the view that there is a need to draw upon international student identity from a holistic perspective. Such an approach will, by its very nature, highlight the complexity of the acculturation process both on and off campus for the individual, and how this shapes their individual identity work.

The notion of identity as reified is discussed and is challenged in Chapters 4 to 6. Identity is not talked about as a thing, but as rather as an emergent outcome of complex and on-going processes of social situations and structures. Identity is conceptualised as emerging from everyday practices (Jenkins 2004; Block 2010). The interviews with participants highlight that identity positions emerge within their conversation about their arrival, their support from friends and family, their experience within the university, their future plans or their current employment. Appendix H provides a full transcript of the interviews with Carl during his study abroad.

The participants' interview data shows their negotiation of the social structures that they encounter, and how this impacted upon their identity as an international student in the UK. By using selected extracts from the interview data of the seven international students who took part in this research, it is possible to see the dynamic interplay between the individual, relational, organisational and societal aspects of identity as experienced by these international students.

Conceptually, this thesis extends the previous work of Jenkins (2004), a prominent theorist of identity, who suggested that there are three dimensions of identity: individual, interaction and institutional. The findings of this thesis support the view that a fourth dimension of identity (societal) deserves recognition. The societal dimension highlights the complexity of international student identity, and the examples chosen illustrate how agency for the individual is sometimes possible within new social situations.

Various diagrams in Chapter 6 illustrate how the identity dimensions interact with each other and change over time. Each dimension is illustrated by a circle which varies in size to reflect the importance of each dimension, depending on the individual's particular circumstances.

The Societal Dimension of Identity

The role of social interaction is often given consideration in terms of the international student experience. Social interaction may include interactions between students and between staff and students which is classroom or campus-based (Caruana and Spurling 2007; Ninnes & Hellsten 2005; Marginson 2007; Prescott & Hellsten 2005; Lee & Rice 2007; Montgomery 2010 and Rienties and Nolan 2014; Ward 2001; Ryan and Viete 2009).

Singh (2005) describes these interactions as a 'zone of contact', and they refer to those social interactions which are campus-based, for example when an international student has spoken to or made friends with host students. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that interactions that occur within this zone are conceptualised ordinarily in terms of problems that individuals may encounter, and not in terms of how the individual may perceive themselves or how others perceive them.

Secondly, the findings in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that the 'zone of contact' needs to be extended to include social interactions within the everyday life of international students. The revised 'zone of contact' includes social interaction in wider society, and it emphasises how those interactions impact on the identity of the individual. Students engage with wider society through every day practices such as shopping, travelling to and from university, socialising with other students and undertaking temporary part-time employment. The findings suggest that the interactions within wider society are spaces for identity formation, identity maintenance or identity work. These findings support the work of Block (2010) and Jenkins (2008), who suggest that identity is constructed within all social interactions that an individual encounters.

Thirdly, consideration needs to be given as to how individuals negotiate their identity within such social interactions. Such an approach must consider the 'agency' of the individual in such situations. These spaces are not neutral spaces where individuals can access a range of identity positions freely within their own 'identity work'; these are spaces where power relations are inherent, and where the 'identity work' of the individual can be constrained. Schwartz et al (2007) describe 'agency' as the achievement through the actions of individuals which help to re-orientate and

reposition people in relation to the social structures they experience. Individuals experiencing a new culture are therefore not conceptualised as ‘’passive objects’; they are conceptualised as ‘social actors’ who are able to act upon social structures through their actions and decisions, although such actions can be constrained by other people. Identity changes are inevitable when in-habiting new social structures, and acculturation has implications for identity change for the individual (Brown et al 2007).

Identity is therefore seen as a result of complex power relations between the individual and others within a social situation. For example, Asash felt that he had been excluded by other colleagues in the workplace. He felt this was due to his ethnicity, and that he was a ‘foreigner’ in another country. When attempts at collegial conversation failed whilst working as a shop assistant, he revised his identity position from one of a colleague to one of ‘difference’ in terms of his own educational background and MBA status. During the research interview Asash referred to the perceived lack of rapport with his fellow workers as caused by their lack of education and experience. For example, he emphasised his own postgraduate status and previous work experience that made him somewhat different in terms of his conversational skills in his mind.

Social interactions within wider society, such as employment situations similar to the one referred to above, are not simply a challenge that individuals or groups of students encounter. Rather, they are a source of identity (re)construction. Low levels of cohesion with other employees or host nationals were found to be a reality for the participants in this study, and opportunities for cultural learning or new friendships were perceived as limited.

Block (2010) suggests that perceived racism can manifest itself within low levels of cohesion and are a reality for a student abroad. The individual stories given by Carl and Asash during their interview revealed that they had personally experienced locals making racist comments. Whilst walking on the High Street, they felt they had been singled out as ‘foreigners’ due to the colour of their skin. They believed that racism was something that can occur to an individual outside of their home country, although they had not experienced direct racism before.

Figure 6.1 shows how the societal dimension of identity is more prominent for Carl and Asash as compared to the other identity dimensions. The societal dimension is illustrated by a larger circle to reflect its relative importance and to illustrate how racial abuse impacts on their 'identity work'. The other dimensions of identity are represented as smaller circles (individual, relational and organisational). Although the other identity dimensions are still present for the individuals, the other dimensions appear to be less challenging at that particular point in time.

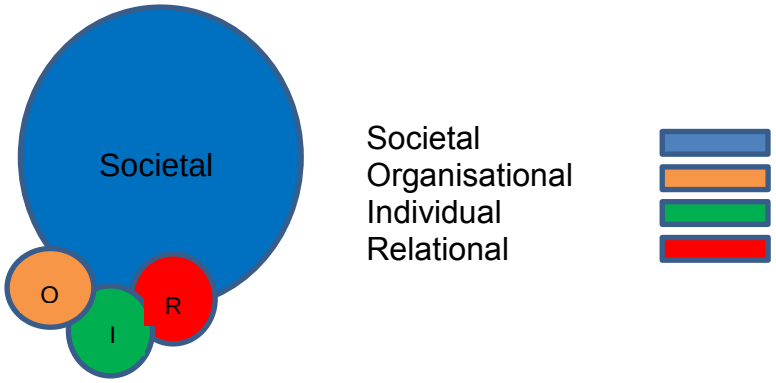


Figure 6.1 Perceived Discrimination (as derived by author)

Carl and Asash experienced unwelcome remarks from locals over a period of six months. These remarks made by locals eventually escalated to an actual threat of physical violence which was perceived as racially motivated. Carl, Asash and some of their friends were returning from an evening out at a local bar in the High Street when they were physically confronted by several locals. Brown and Jones (2011) suggest that one third of students whom they surveyed had personal experience of some form of racial abuse.

At the UKCISA Annual Conference (2013), Anwar and Paudel presented a paper on 'International students: experience of racism and institutional responsibility'. Their paper drew on a study by Brown and Jones (2011) which highlights an 'unfriendly and indifferent host community with whom contact is hard to achieve'. They called for further research into the extent and impact of racial discrimination on international students. The findings of this thesis provide some insights into the nature of racial abuse and how individuals may respond in such social interactions.

Asash and Carl revised their ‘passive foreigner’ identity when confronted by some locals in an off-campus area. They explained that they did not want any trouble, and re-enforced their own identity as ‘a temporary citizen who was only in the UK to study’. An individual is engaged in an ongoing process of how they perceive themselves and how they would like others to perceive them (Jenkins 2004). The identity of ‘temporary resident’ or ‘student’ however, was not accepted by the locals and they proceeded to intimidate the students and their friends both physically and verbally.

Pai (2006) suggests that situations such as these are a hidden problem due to the lack of research on racial incidents against international students and the lack of reporting by individuals. The students did not report these racial abuse incidents to the police or to the University, and hence Figure 6.1 illustrates the organisational dimension as being of less importance with regards to this particular social situation.

Social interactions within new cultures are recognised as potential sources of conflict (Bochner et al 1977; Singh 2005; Equality Unit Report 2012). Economic, political and cultural factors such as unemployment and levels of immigration within the host country can impact on wider social interactions and create tensions between a foreign individual and a local. Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) found that within a semi-urban campus environment perceived discrimination can be an additional hurdle that international students have to cope with. Such conflict is often beyond the control of the individual. Although the university is located within a semi-rural location the students in this research project reported that they did not constantly experience racist comments. However, the perceived threat of a physical racial attack created a heightened sense of awareness of how others may perceive them in an off-campus environment. For these students, the perceived threat of a future physical racial attack impacted on how they saw themselves within the wider society. New identity positions were created as a result of this social interaction, as they began to consider themselves not simply as ‘foreign’ or as ‘other’ which had been ascribed by others but as ‘protectors’, and subsequently made arrangements to escort the Indian female students in their programme cohort to and from the University over the next few weeks.

The social interactions with wider society continued to be a site of identity construction, as they added new meaning to their identity as an international student. They

reinforced their 'foreigner' identity, as they felt unsafe and unwelcome off-campus. Block (2007) suggests that during study abroad international students can reposition themselves away from intercultural identity to one where they reinforce their own 'national identity'**.** The fact that they remained in mono-cultural groups reinforced their sense of 'national identity'. However, it is important to acknowledge that societal structures do impact on identity, and that consideration must be given to levels of agency of the individual. For example, at times Carl and Asash felt 'helpless' as they were unable to accompany friends who worked late shifts in local bars and restaurants. Some identity opportunities within society, such as 'fully participating as members of the host society', were perceived as being unavailable to them.

In terms of the wider society a 'peripheral identity' can occur where an individual is unable to become a fully participating member of the host community (Lee and Rice 2007). Lee and Rice (2007) argue that perceived discrimination cannot be explained simply in adjustment terms. They suggest that a lack of social acceptance on behalf of the host society must therefore be considered. This lack of social acceptance offers further support that study abroad is a site of identity construction. It would follow therefore that study abroad can act as a site of inclusion, exclusion, privilege and disadvantage where social identity and relations of power are established (Hirst 2007; Leask and Carroll 2011).

Further support for the societal dimension of international student identity is provided and discussed in the next section of this chapter, where students perceive racism to occur within the everyday practices of local employment. Although the perception of racism within employment varies between the participants in this research, gaining temporary employment is seen as an important part of international student identity, as it is seen as a means of funding their subsistence within the UK.

Perceived racism within the employment context

Through the search for part-time employment, the seven international students interacted with employers and employment agencies within wider society. Initially they sought the type of employment which would be valued by post-graduate employers in

India, such as office work. The students had to revise their own international student identity as they struggled to find part-time employment of this nature in the local area.

During her interview, Nari felt that her lack of appropriate work experience in the UK was seen as a problem by several UK recruitment agencies. Despite regularly visiting several recruitment agencies in search of a job, she was unable to secure part-time office work. She possessed previous office work experience in India, and she felt angry and disappointed by the reactions of recruitment agency staff. She saw her treatment by the recruitment staff as racially-motivated. During a visit to a recruitment agency she saw other job-seekers being informed of opportunities in office work, yet she was told there were no suitable opportunities. After months of unsuccessful searching, she decided to give up her search for office work and focus on her studies instead, whilst the other participants continued to search for work.

The local employment context is an opportunity for students to have contact with members of the host society, either as work colleagues or customers. The local employment context is a site for identity construction where individuals can undertake different roles, develop working relationships with other staff and gain cultural knowledge about how UK businesses operate. In his initial search for temporary work as a shop assistant, Suri was told that he unsuitable for employment because he was not familiar with UK currency.

Although some of the students in this research found temporary employment, many of them perceived racism amongst their fellow employees or managers. Examples include exclusion from conversations with work colleagues, or a lack of communication with a manager. Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) suggest that levels of perceived discrimination are much higher for international students from non-European countries. The students felt that the opportunity for social interaction with work colleagues was difficult due to the low level of social cohesion between themselves and others. This is particularly difficult for an individual who may work for an employer where co-nationals are not employed.

Asash refers to feelings of social isolation with little or no communication with other employees. An absence of overt conflict can often mask tensions and mistrust within social situations (Shaggar et al 2000). After several attempts at trying to develop a rapport with work colleagues, he gave up.

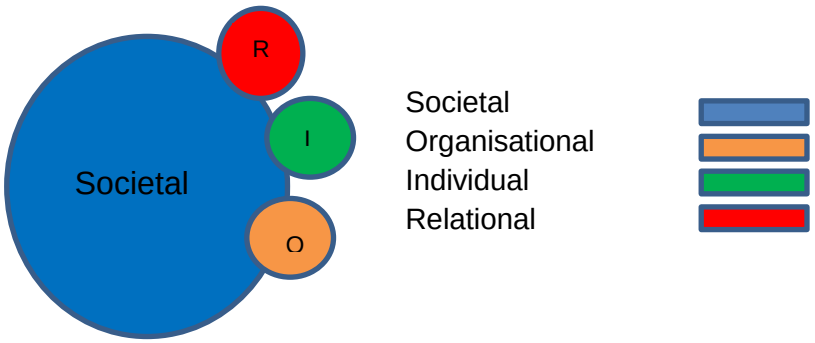


Figure 6.2 Racism within the Workplace (derived by author)

Figure 6.2 illustrates the perceived racism that Asash experienced and shows how the societal dimension takes prominence at this time. The perceived racism among his work colleagues is seen by Asash as part of the wider societal issue of a lack of employment within the city:

> There are a lot of differences it's not like it is in our country. They're not you know very what, how to put this very [ ], they don't find it nice to see people like us around the city. If we are walking down the high street or anywhere it's not that they are looking past me, not smile. If you smile, they not smile (sic) back. [Err] it's not exactly racial comments or like that or that sort, it's not like that. It's not [err], they don't fancy [err] around the city much. There could be a lot of reason (sic) so [err] the employment situation and this… (Asash)

A lack of social interaction can be caused by individuals preferring to stay within familiar cultural groups. Dunne (2009) suggests that interaction occurs more often amongst individuals of similar backgrounds. However, in the above interview extract, Asash sees himself as 'an unwelcome foreigner'. He suggests wider societal issues such as lack of employment opportunities and immigration as factors that may be causing the perceived discrimination. In such a situation an individual may be less able to exercise agency, as the lack of social cohesion between them and the wider community may be governed by factors which are beyond the control of the individual

(Singh 2005). This can further result in an individual sitting on the periphery of the wider social community (Montgomery 2010).

The examples presented here illustrate the impact of wider society on an individual's identity work. The societal dimension is an important area for consideration. The findings suggest that there are further opportunities for identity construction within wider society where the individual can revise, maintain or create new identities.

The following section in this chapter will discuss in more detail how the four dimensions of identity interact and change over time.

How the four dimensions of Identity interact with each other and change over time

It is not suggested here that the societal dimension influences students' identity (re)construction in isolation. This section will illustrate how the four identity dimensions interact and change over time. The discussion is organised using stages within the study abroad: Arrival; First Few Months; Dissertation Stage and Permanent Employment.

Identity is a multi-layered phenomenon that individuals are continually inhabiting and having attributed to them new and emergent identity positions (Hannerz 1996). The previous discussion in this chapter highlighted how an individual's social interactions in wider society, helps maintain, create or revise their identity. Woodward (2004) suggests that the exploration of an individual's identity raises questions about how individuals fit into an academic community and the wider social world. For some international students, the fit may not be an easy process. Busher (2002) suggests that:-

> Being and becoming international students in UK higher education is …. a process of struggle, resistance, reconstruction and transformation in order to become not only legitimate members of the academic community, but also to integrate into the host macro-social community *…(Busher 2002 in Nominan 2007, p78)*

The problems that international students experience during their study abroad are well documented in the literature (Woodward 2004; Montgomery 2010; Gu et al 2010; Block 2010). However, the findings in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that identity is emergent for these Indian international students within everyday practices during a study abroad. An exploration of how the four dimensions interact with each other is necessary, as this will highlight the temporary and dynamic nature of international student identity. The findings suggest that the four identity dimensions do not remain static throughout the process of being and becoming international students, and that each of the four dimensions should not be considered in isolation of the others.

Upon Arrival

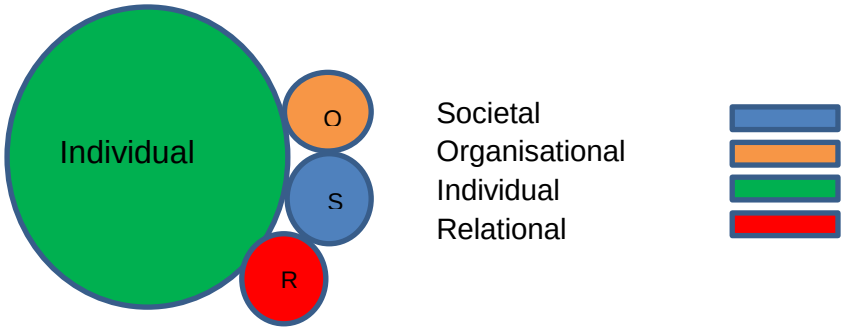
Chapters 4 and 5 consider the four dimensions of international student identity and add value by providing a more holistic view of the international student experience. Each of the dimensions forms an integral part of an individual's identity and should not be considered in isolation.

On arrival to the UK, the individual dimension appears as pre-dominant, particularly as students adjust to the new culture in terms of food, weather, accommodation and language. For example, the participants each reported aspects of acculturative stress such as homesickness, difficulties coping with the colder weather, difficulties finding authentic food and anxiety about the cost of accommodation and food, which appears to support previous research (Ward 2001; Ward and Kennedy 1994; Ward 2008). Moreover, these experiences provide insight into opportunities for identity work as opposed to problems students encounter.

Factors such as gender, age and previous experience of travel or employment appear to influence how these students saw themselves 'as coping' or 'being able to cope' within the UK. For some this was only a temporary identity position, whilst for Robin this was more prolonged. Cultural integration was described by Robin as 'more difficult', as he held traditional cultural beliefs which he felt were not as firmly held by his peers. Although he had a desire to do 'something different, and learn about new

cultures', he found socialising with others difficult due to these perceived differences and spent a lot of time in his room. Study abroad is seen by some researchers as creation of space to acquire intercultural knowledge and competence (Block 2010; Alred & Byran 2002). For theorists such as Block (2010), these spaces are a site for identity construction. Robin's aspirations of becoming an 'international student' (who could learn about new cultures) was he said due to the perceived by him lack of a perceived appropriate cultural setting. For example he was unable to resolve the incompatibility between his perception of his old culture and that of the new culture. He was unwilling to reposition himself and assumed a 'marginalised identity', which consequently impacted on his opportunity to acquire cultural knowledge by engaging in social activities on and off campus. Berry et al (1989) suggest that if the maintenance of cultural heritage is important to the individual, then marginalisation of the individual can occur within the new culture. Ward (2008) refers to this process as 'ethno-cultural conflict'. Such conflict is a space for 'ethno-cultural identity' and in this particular case Robin's identity work is no exception.

Figure 6.3 Robin: Ethno-cultural Conflict (derived by the author)



The above example illustrates how the individual dimension is predominant for Robin upon arrival. Coates (2004/5) suggests that acculturation to the new culture may not be desired by all students, particularly where they are abroad for a short period of time. This would suggest that the individual is either unable or has no desire to create a culturally integrated identity within the new culture. Bradatan et al (2010) suggest that a 'diasporic' identity is where an individual not only identifies him/herself as a member of the home nation, but he/she is also strongly committed to the new community that community, while living as a passive citizen in a different country.

Robin felt that he was unable to fully interact with the social life of the new land, and looked forward to the moment of his return to India.

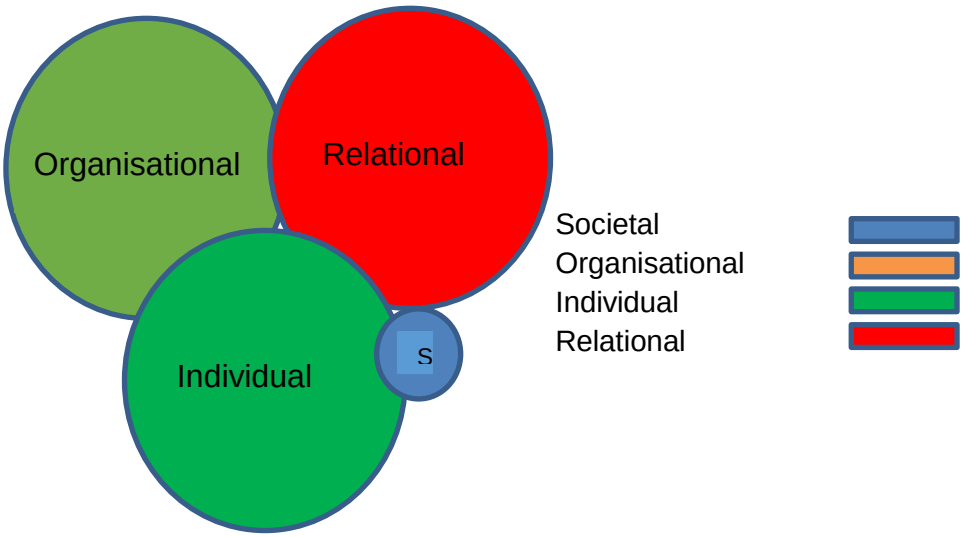
Upon arrival in the UK, students were enrolled on postgraduate programmes at the university as a condition of their student visa. Figure 6.3 shows the reconfiguration of the four identity dimensions. The organisational dimension is more dominant at this time because each of the students interviewed experienced problems of academic adjustment which impacted on their individual identity work. These included revisions to their own identity as they found themselves facing unfamiliar teaching and learning practices. Students also felt some level of anxiety which they had not previously experienced. Although academic adjustment is a commonly reported problem within the literature on international student experience (Handa 2004; Ryan 2005; Ward et al 2001; Jin & Cortazzi 1998; Caruana & Spurling 2007; Guo & ven der Heijden 2008; Reece and Walker 2006), it is rarely expressed in terms of how it impacts on the identity of the individual. Moreover, this readjustment did not occur at the beginning of their study, but throughout their studies, as suggested in Chapters 4 and 5.

Beauty and Nia both referred to academic adjustment issues. One particular difficulty was experienced during the first few months of their studies. They had difficulty in understanding some of the tutors, either because the tutors spoke too fast or they spoke with a regional accent. They understood very little of what was being said and were unable to fully participate in the classes. They temporarily remained on the periphery of the new classroom environment. Identity theorists see this as a 'crisis of identity' (Woodward 2004), where old certainties no longer exist and this can lead to a breakdown of a previously stable group membership. Handa (2006) suggests that an individual's own cultural background and prior learning experiences in their home culture can hinder their adjustment. Previous identities that the individual may possess from their studies in India provide a source of security in terms of a level of familiarity with the values and beliefs of the educational system, previous student performance and a sense of belonging.

An individual can experience problems of academic adjustment as well as adjustment problems to the climate and culture. The lack of understanding of what the tutors were saying coincided with feelings of homesickness. They were both experiencing

difficulties in adjusting to the differences between the two cultures in terms of the weather, accommodation and the absence of their families. Nia and Beauty did not consider themselves prepared for life as a student in the UK, and did not revise this particular identity position upon arrival or within the first few months. They reported that they felt less confident than their male peers in dealing with the challenges of living and studying in a new culture. They felt they did not possess the experience of independent living prior to arriving in the UK, despite having some work experience in India after they had graduated. They struggled with aspects of independent living such as managing their finances, shopping and cooking in a new country. Despite the similarity in age to Suri, Robin and Carl, they felt unprepared for study abroad and what it entailed. The security of their home country, in terms of past academic achievements and support from parents, was evident as they struggled with the significant changes they faced. There is some support in the literature to suggest that female international students may find adjustment to the host culture more difficult than males (Manese, Sedlacek, & Leong, 1984).

Figure 6.4 shows how the four identity dimensions interact.



The organisational, relational and individual dimensions of identity are shown to be more dominant at this particular time as Beauty struggled with academic and wider cultural adjustment issues. During the first few months of her arrival in the UK this struggle manifested itself for her as home sickness. Beauty required continual

reassurance from her parents that she had made the right decision to study abroad and that she could cope with the challenges that faced her.. Her identity work incorporated not only an identity position as a 'newcomer' to the UK, but an identity which was in crisis. Although acculturative stress was experienced by other students in the research, it was experienced in varying degrees throughout their studies. Individual factors such as previous education and travel experience, gender, age and previous work experience appeared to play a role in determining how the individual was able to manage their new international student identity (Montgomery 2010; Gu 2007). Tomlinson (2003) suggests that generic accounts of acculturation are not useful, and that emphasis should be placed on individual accounts.

Individual accounts of how students manage their international student identity are illustrated by the examples chosen in Chapter 6, and these examples demonstrate how the identity dimensions interact in social situations such as Upon Arrival, First Few Months, Dissertation Stage and Permanent Employment.

The findings suggest that the participants in this research were not faced solely with academic adjustment problems Upon Arrival and within the First Few Months. Moreover, wider cultural adjustments as discussed in chapters 4 and 5 were simultaneously experienced by the individual. In addition, problems of academic and cultural adjustment are not unique to these participants; previous studies (Montgomery 2010; Ryan 2012), have simply reported them as problems that individuals experience, and not as a site of identity construction.

First Few Months

The relational dimension of identity consists of family and friends who act as a network of emotional and financial support to students during their study abroad, as well as fellow students who act as a network to support acculturation issues.

The findings suggest that the relational dimension of an individual's identity is likely to change during their study abroad, and this notion is discussed here using the example of an individual's membership of a peer support network.

A peer support network can provide information and support to an individual during their integration into a new culture (UKCOSA 2004). The findings in Chapters 4 and 5

suggest that a peer support network can also act as a source of identity construction. Membership, for example, of a peer support network confirms the 'newcomer' identity of the individual. The 'newcomer' can be given information and support on matters such as accommodation or shopping. The 'newcomer' can also be given information and support on academic issues such as study skills, seminars and assessment preparation.

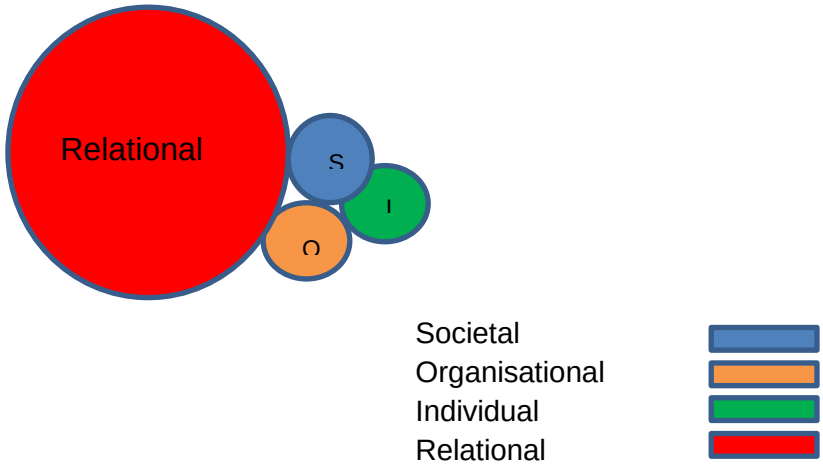
Membership of a peer support network can also influence how an individual sees themselves. For example, it has previously been noted that such a network can act as a means of creating a sense of solidarity, or a shared common fate (Montgomery 2010; Singh 2005). It would follow therefore that a support network can offer identity positions to new and existing members. Existing members of the peer support network are able to identify with the experiences of newcomers in terms of information or support that is needed when facing the challenges of a new culture.

Nari's motive for joining such a network was based upon her poor performance in her assessments. In contrast to her fellow students, her accommodation and temporary employment were located in another city. Nari found herself in an unusual position of commuting three hours each day to and from the university. She was struggling with combining her studies with her domestic duties for her aunt and husband. Her domestic arrangements meant that contact with other students was limited and study time was difficult to prioritise. She was also aware of her own lack of appropriate study skills as the study abroad progressed. She participated as a member of the informal network of students and utilised Facebook to contact her peers and ask them questions about academic issues she was struggling with. Although not a fully participating member of a peer support network, Nari kept in contact with other students over the taught part of the MBA programme, whilst the other members benefitted from studying in the library together and socialising together.

The relational dimension of identity is evident from the findings of this research, it and adds further support to the view that membership of a peer support network can vary. Within the findings of this research, several students identified themselves as helping other students with their studies or seeking the help of other students. Block (2010) suggests that an individual may act as a student within a formal classroom setting,

and as a ‘teacher’ or ‘mentor’ in a less formal setting. Students within the peer support network were able to act as ‘teachers’ or ‘mentors’ to students such as Nari. Meanwhile, Nari saw herself as a ‘student’ within the peer support network, as she sought any help she could in order to improve her studying and her module grades. To some extent, this lends support to the view of Montgomery (2010, who suggests that a peer support network acts as an ‘emotional anchor’ for individuals who find themselves in similar circumstances.

Figure 6.5 Peer Support Network (derived by author)



Although academic support for writing assessments and study skills was available to all international students at the university, Nari, like other international students, preferred to seek help from peers with whom she studied. Figure 6.6 above shows the relational dimension of the peer support network as being very important to Nari.

Further research is required to explore how an individual negotiates their individual identities within a peer support network. For example, once Beauty saw herself as ‘no longer struggling’ with her academic adjustment, she repositioned her identity within the network and only accessed the network for social reasons. Previously, the network had given her confidence with her studies, and served as a place where she could share cultural norms such as cooking and eating traditional Indian food:

> …Err with a when use do (sic) assignments we shared information and [err] we all did our assignments together[err] sit in the library until 12 o’clock, 11.30 in the night and is was a really good experience, then after that we go home cook and eat and we go asleep around 2 , 2.30 and

> then again the morning we come back to library and start working it was really busy in the second semester we got so many assignments so that's why [smiles] And err, actually I didn't face any problems to be honest with you. (Beauty)

These findings support the view that identity dimensions change in relation to what is happening to the individual (Jenkins 2004). Figure 6.6 shows the relational dimension of identity increasing in importance as students experience problems with academic adjustment. It would appear that individuals engage with the network in different ways, depending on what is happening to them at the time. This lends further support to the notion that identity positions can be temporary.

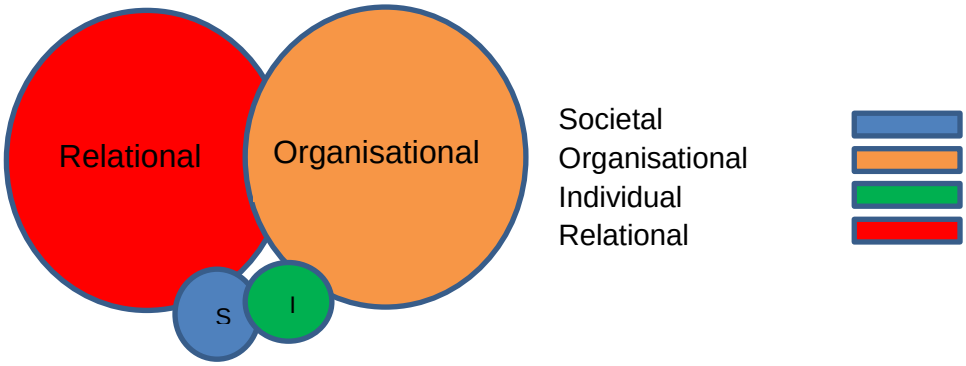


Figure 6.6 Academic Adjustment and Peer Support (derived by author)

The Dissertation Stage

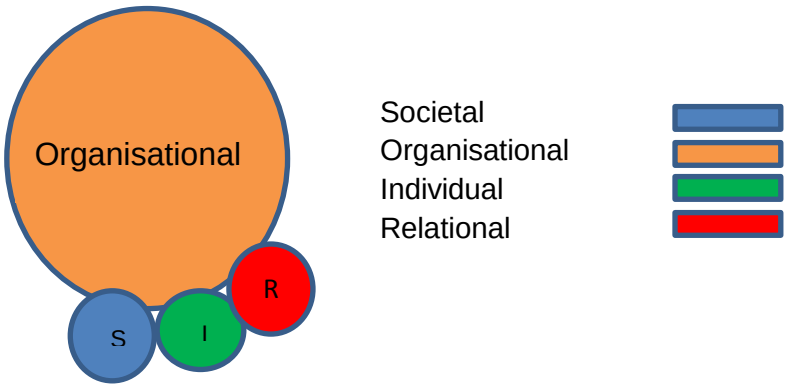
The discussion in this chapter supports the view that the dimensions of an individual's identity do change over time. The dissertation stage of the MBA is no exception to such change. Identity change is usually influenced by what is going on for the individual (Jenkins 2004), in this case the international student reaching the final stage of their postgraduate studies before permanent employment is sought.

Professional identity

As with the previous stages of the study abroad discussed in this section (Upon Arrival and First Few Months), the four dimensions varied in importance during the dissertation stage.

The dissertation stage appears to impact on an individual's identity work in different ways. The student may attach importance to the academic and pastoral support they receive during their dissertation. The organisational dimension of identity changed for individuals during the dissertation stage of their MBA degree. More noticeably, students relied less on the peer network during the dissertation stage and more on members of staff within the university. Individuals saw their supervisor as a key resource to helping them through the dissertation stage of their Masters' degree. Previous research suggests that students are more likely to seek support from their supervisors as opposed to other students during this time (Barron and Zeegers 2006). Students were able to develop much closer relationships with the organisation through the support and guidance from their dissertation supervisors. Figure 6.7 shows how the four identity dimensions reconfigure during this stage, with the organisational dimension assuming a dominant position. The peer support network is less important at this time, and is thus illustrated as being much smaller in comparison to the organisational dimension.

Figure 6.7 Carl's Dissertation Stage (derived by author)



The participants suggested that, during the dissertation stage, they did not regard peers as a 'useful' resource in terms of gaining knowledge about the dissertation. The reason given behind this was that they felt that their chosen dissertation topics were too specific for anyone other than their supervisor. It was evident that the organisational dimension was predominant over the other three dimensions throughout the dissertation stage. For example, the support from the dissertation supervisor was regarded as instrumental for Carl. He reported that he was unable to progress with his research at times because he was unsure of what was required of him:

> [Err….] that was [err….] absolutely a new experience, difficult of course. I, I had no idea what the target was and what the end result is going to be. So you are absolutely freezed (sic) and paused. You don't know how to proceed further. (Carl)

The dissertation stage of the postgraduate degree revealed the multi-layered nature of identity, where the organisational dimension is predominant in its interaction with the other three dimensions. On an individual level, Carl experienced a sense of powerlessness and anxiety during his dissertation stage, and he was not sure how to proceed with his research. He was also expected to return home to complete his dissertation whilst living with his parents in India. The above example illustrates how the four identity dimensions interact for an individual.

As the dissertation stage progressed, individual students began to experience additional pressure from their family members. Carl gave several reasons for this. Firstly, he was conscious of his age, as males were expected to marry before they reached the age of 30, whereas females were expected to be married soon after graduation. Secondly, his family believed that a British MBA could attract a more educated and wealthier bride. Thirdly, the successful completion of his dissertation could enable him to obtain a 'Post Study Work' (PSW) visa to secure more permanent employment in the UK.

The following section illustrates how the four dimensions interact during the search for permanent employment.

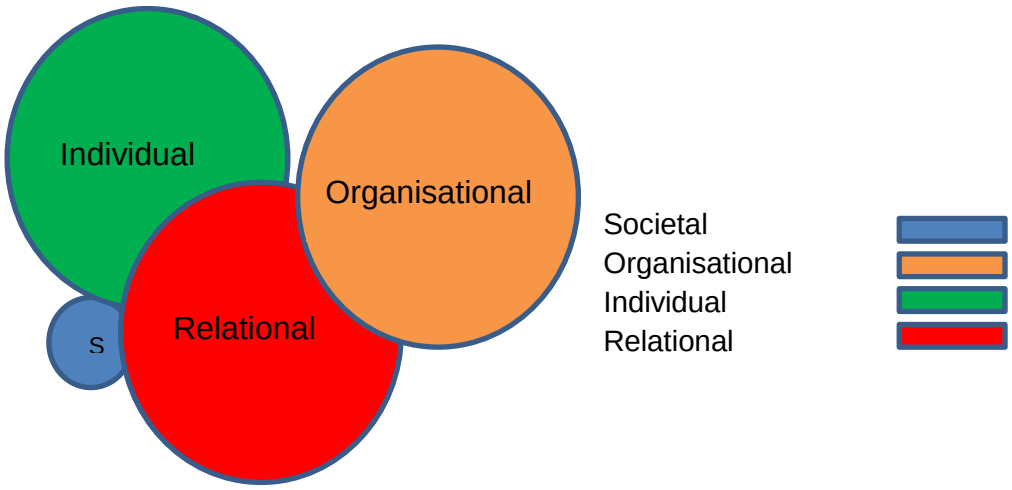
Post-MBA Employment

In order to search for more permanent full-time employment, students were expected to successfully complete their dissertation. Unsuccessful completion would mean they would not meet the criteria for the Post Study Work visa required for employment in the U.K. However, the successful completion of a UK MBA and finding permanent UK employment was not achieved by all the students. For example, Asash could not afford to take any MBA type job in the UK: it had to a job that was valued by employers in India so that he could enter the Indian labour market with the appropriate postgraduate qualifications and experience.

> I cannot take the risk of doing any job in this country how it is (sic) by 30, 31, you have to be settled that is how it is. Family commitments are in our country. You do not go beyond that, 32 is the deadline you do not go beyond that. (Asash)

As the opportunity for permanent employment in the UK becomes more real for the students, the individual, relational and organisational dimensions become more prominent. Encouragement from parents to successfully complete the MBA is simultaneously a source of anxiety, encouragement and identity. This is illustrated in Figure 6.8, where the individual dimension increases in importance relative to the relational and organisational dimensions.

Figure 6.8 Employment, Marriage and a British MBA (derived by the author)



On receiving news from the university that he had failed his dissertation, Carl realised that his future identity position as a professional in the UK would no longer be an option for him. He would not be able to meet the requirements of the UK Post Study Work visa, and this meant he would have to return to India without any work experience in the UK. The following extract illustrates how the PSW is a source of identity construction:

> …..so, as with me everything was set I was applying for jobs, I was getting a couple of replies, professional jobs, I am talking about proper MBA jobs. And now since I have failed, everything has just crashed for the moment, and I guess my visa was depending on MBA. I cannot apply for PSW. I cannot get a job. [ ]..I know it is not possible to stay in this country for one year. (Carl)

Carl had returned to his parents' home in India during the third term to complete his dissertation. During this time, his parents had found him a suitable bride and he was engaged to be married. He reported that his identity as a British MBA graduate with potential for work experience within the UK had featured strongly in his potential marriage profile. The failure to secure the PSW would mean that Carl would have to return to India without any UK work experience. During his interview he was very emotional, and expressed that he and his family would face embarrassment and shame from this situation.

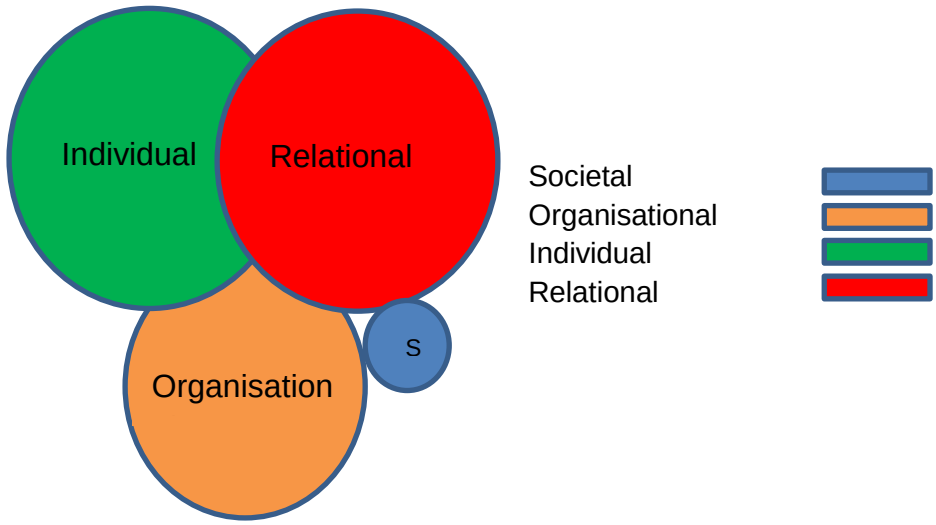


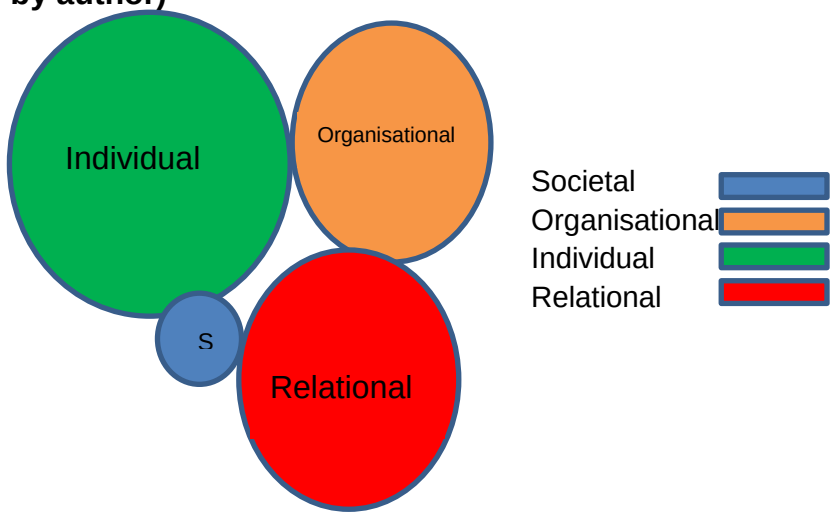
Figure 6.9 Carl's Failure and Personal Shame (derived by the author)

Carl's identity position within his peer group was at odds with those of his fellow students. The findings suggest that his peers were still pinning their hopes on securing UK employment, having successfully completed the dissertation. Carl was facing personal shame in terms of his failed dissertation, as well as bringing shame on his family. He believed that friends, future in-laws and other family members may not speak to his parents after this incident.

For others, the successful completion of the dissertation created alternative identity positions. Such identity positions were also gendered, but signified a sense of a temporary liberation from cultural norms. As female students, Beauty and Nia needed to seek permission from their parents to study abroad. They would be expected to return home to India immediately once they had completed their studies. Similar to the males in this research, the females would be expected to marry on returning to India. Their British MBA identity would also feature in future marriage negotiations in terms of attracting future partners.

Having studied abroad for over a year, both Beauty and Nia came to see that a further sense of independence could be achieved if they applied for a PSW visa and secure employment within the UK. However, they would still have to seek the permission of their parents to apply for the visa and to remain in the UK. Figure 6.10 shows how the different dimensions of identity interact during the latter stages of their study abroad.

Figure 6.10 Nia and Beauty: UK Employment and Individual Independence (as derived by author)



As stated previously, identity is constructed both through how individuals see themselves and how people see them. Nia and Beauty were the first females in their own families to study abroad. The findings in Figure 6.10 show that the individual dimension is predominant at this time (12 months after enrolling on an MBA in the UK). The students see themselves as being able to negotiate with their parents to remain within the UK and seek employment. However, the organisational and relational dimensions of identity still play an important part within the current and future identity work of the individual at this time, with the societal dimension being less predominant.

Nia and Beauty both lacked confidence when they first arrived. They had been chaperoned in India and had not previously lived outside of their parents' home. Becoming international students provided a different sense of identity for these students. Although they shared some of the same characteristics with the males in this research, their experiences were gendered and guided by cultural norms. They did not wish to return home immediately. They had gained a sense of independence through travel and part-time work in the UK and desired to have further independence before returning home to India to settle down and get married. For example, Nia claimed that she wanted to live in the UK for a longer period of time and see more of the world:

> But now I think I should, I should explore more worlds, because I don't know what will happen two years from now because obviously I will have to marry someone, I would have to live wherever my spouse would live I would have to go with them. So it's better, right now I am independent and I can live my life on my own, on my way (sic). So I am thinking to stay here for two years. (Nia)

The findings suggest that study abroad made such an impression on Nia that she regarded herself as an 'ambassador' to other female relatives. She was the first female in her family to leave India to study. She saw her own successful negotiation of study abroad as an opportunity for other female relatives to do the same.

Each of the examples discussed in Chapter 6 show how the four dimensions of identity interact with each other. The examples chosen reveal the temporary nature of identity, and that the organisational dimension of identity varies in importance. The multi-layered nature of identity illustrates how identities are constructed by individuals during

the final stages of their degree programme, and how they come to position themselves within the academic community and wider social setting.

Summary

The research findings challenge the linear approach to intercultural adaptation of an individual within a new culture. The inter-relationship between issues such as language, weather, accommodation, social interaction, personal growth and academic achievements provides a complex set of issues that the individual needs to manage. It is the organisation of these issues that results in the reconfiguration of identity.

This chapter has outlined the extent to which the findings support the existing literature. It suggests that an over-reliance on the problems that international students experience may constrain developments within that field. It introduces the concept of identity as how individuals see themselves and how others see them. It introduces study abroad as a site for identity construction, and illustrates how we may think of international student identity as having four dimensions. These dimensions are societal, relational, organisational and individual. Moreover, it acknowledges the importance of a holistic approach to international student identity. Such an approach is underpinned by examining how the four dimensions of identity interact and change over time, which supports the views of Jenkins (2004) and Block (2010).

Additional attention is paid to the societal aspect of a student's study abroad, and how this dimension interacts with the other dimensions of identity. The examples discussed are drawn from a number of international students who took part in the research and the experiences they encountered during a 12-month period.

The research has raised questions as to how individuals fit into the academic community and wider social community, and how identity can be temporary and dynamic. Issues of 'agency' have also been illustrated though the actions of the individuals which help to re-orientate and reposition people in relation to the social structures they experience during their study abroad.

An increasing number of international students are crossing borders to seek an international higher education experience, and the identity work of these students will become increasingly important.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter provides major insights gained from time spent with the Indian international students who participated in this research. The implications drawn from the data and my recommendations for viewing the international study abroad as a means of 'identity construction' are discussed. Finally, a reflective section is provided in relation to the understanding I have gained from the research and the personal benefits to myself as a lecturer and the participants.

Major Insights

This research has re-affirmed that study abroad is a site for identity construction for these international students. International student identity is constructed both individually and socially through everyday activities both on and off-campus. The participants provided individual accounts of their international student experiences, drawing on individual, relational, organisational and societal dimensions.

The interpretation of their own international student experiences has highlighted several opportunities where identity work could be carried out. At the individual level, this includes aspects of the new culture which confronted the students, such as the food, language, accommodation and the weather. Individuals negotiated such challenges without any previous experience of travel outside of their own country. Their individual sense of well-being and personal growth through dealing with such challenges offered opportunities for them to negotiate new identities.

At the relational level, the role of family and friends offered opportunities for emotional and financial support. Individuals were able to share their new cultural experiences with family members through daily SKYPE communication. Individuals were negotiating both their past experiences and present experiences simultaneously,

otherwise referred to as ‘a state of in between-ness’ (Ting Toomey 1999). The opportunity to offer peer support to other students on the Masters’ programme also provided opportunities for the individual to revise and maintain existing identities, as participants managed the uncertainties of their new academic/social culture. Co-national friendship groups reinforced the national identity of these students, so much so that they found themselves referring to an atrium area of the Business School as ‘little India’; nevertheless, some individuals did negotiate a more ‘internationalised sense of self’ through these and other activities.

Surprisingly, the organisational aspect of an individual’s identity work was found to vary in importance over the duration of the individual’s study abroad. It is vital to acknowledge, the individual’s experiences during their study abroad and the intersectionality of identity across each of the four dimensions identified. Confidence in academic writing increased by varying degrees over the first two semesters, but each of the students reported that they worried about writing a dissertation and experienced a sense of uncertainty and insecurity during the dissertation stage. Furthermore, cultural obligations to return to India for various family events or to fulfil other family obligations coincided with assessment deadlines and the availability of tutor support. This created tensions for individuals who found themselves having to manage such conflicts with varying degrees of success.

Finally, attention is drawn to the wider societal dimensions of identity. Social situations off-campus such as casual employment, daily/leisure activities and post-MBA employment offer important spaces for identity construction for the international student. Engaging with co-workers can mean that such spaces may offer opportunities for an individual to extend their intercultural learning of the wider local community as well as to acquire transferrable skills and knowledge. However, perceived discrimination from co-workers and/or some members of the local community meant that these social situations were difficult for the individual to negotiate within their new-found international student identity. The societal dimension provides a rare insight into the wider context of the international student experience and its opportunity for further identity work to take place. By highlighting the personal accounts of these international students as they encountered wider society, it was possible to gain a basic understanding of the issues involved as well as acknowledge situations where

individuals had to revise their international student identity to that of ‘other’ or ‘foreigner’

Whilst some students such as Carl returned to India, others students such as Robin sought work as MBA professionals within the UK. What was of particular interest in this research was the identity work of the female students (Nari, Beauty and Nia). For them, study abroad UK symbolised a perceived ‘ambassador status’ amongst other female members of their own family. International study abroad was therefore regarded by themselves as an opportunity to negotiate a new sense of freedom and independence. Thus, they were able to revise their international female student identity further by searching for jobs abroad and postponing their marriage plans for up to two years.

Implications of Identity Work

This research has explored international student identity from a holistic perspective. What is re-affirmed in this research is that ‘identity work’ is an ongoing process for the individual both on and off-campus.

The complex nature of international student identity is illustrated by the inter-related nature of the four dimensions of identity (individual, relational, organisational and societal) and how identity changes over time as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This holistic view of identity highlights how the experiences of these international students on and off campus can impact on their own identity and how they feel about themselves and others.

Transcribed interview extracts were analysed to illustrate how participants discursively construct their identity during their study abroad. Over the duration of their study abroad their perception of their own identity changed over time; in addition, identity work is shown to be both temporary and dynamic, depending on what is occurring for the individual within a range of social situations (see Chapter 6).

Despite attempting to align themselves to the requirements of their new educational and social culture, it was evident from their accounts that the students did in time learn

to cope with their experiences within the university environment with varying degrees of success (Al-Sharideh & Goe 1998).

The ‘identity work’ of these students’ highlighted a dynamic range of contributory factors both within and beyond the individuals. During their study in the UK, the students were responding simultaneously to a range of different factors both on and off campus.

Cultural beliefs and experiences prior to studying in the UK framed their ongoing identity work both on and off campus, and this process was complex and unique to the individual. The dynamic nature of their ‘identity work’ meant that a range of factors, such as previous education, gender, family expectations, financial support and social networks, each impacted simultaneously upon the participants in the research, and to varying degrees. It was evident from their respective ‘identity work’ that a continuous modification of existing beliefs and practices took place, a process which was evident throughout their study abroad in the UK.

The ways in which the students managed the challenges of studying abroad, revealed their commitment to successfully completing their studies, securing local post-MBA employment. The students to influence their own circumstances and demonstrated agency in their efforts to secure temporary local employment despite experiencing perceived discrimination in the workplace. Their determination to maintain financial independence in terms of living costs was continual throughout their studies, and meant that they undertook jobs that they would not have considered under normal circumstances.

Off-campus experiences therefore formed an important part of the international student experience, particularly with regard to part-time employment. These students experienced a mix of different identity positions both ascribed by others and self-constructed. Identity positions which had been ascribed by others resulted in individuals being perceived as a ‘foreigner’ or as ‘other’ (Block 2010). The participants responded in different ways to this ascribed identity; for some, it was part and parcel of being abroad, whereas for others it was a view which only manifested itself amongst less-educated people. The regulation of international student work visas meant that,

in the wider society, agency was restricted for the individual, as without the visa they would have to return to their home country and no further international exposure would be available.

Identity Work: resilience, independence and resourcefulness

When the participants of this study enrolled on the Masters' programme at the university, they had no previous experience of living or studying abroad. Their resilience, independence and resourcefulness is highlighted within their identity work.

Previous experience of travel or living independently from parents within India appeared to help some male students acculturate more easily, but life in the UK nevertheless still featured cultural differences. The participants' ability to meet the challenges of a new academic culture and to adapt to a different lifestyle indicates their level of personal resilience.

Independence was evidenced by the participants in terms of how and with whom they spent their leisure time. Part-time employment also enabled individuals to manage their own finances and provided subsistence for living costs. Although opportunities for building relationships with co-workers were limited, the students nevertheless each felt they had gained personal skills and knowledge whilst living abroad.

> "When people spend some time away from their familiar surroundings and enter daily life within a different culture, some sort of cultural adaptation is inevitable." (Hebrok 2011:61)

Resourcefulness of the individual within the context of study abroad is referred to here as their 'ability to act effectively or imaginatively, especially in difficult circumstances'. Opportunities to be resourceful were created whilst managing the cultural differences between their home country and the UK. Resourcefulness manifested itself in various ways, from creating social networks as well as academic support networks, to gaining casual employment within a local labour market with few opportunities and to individuals managing a sense of self which was grounded both in India and the UK.

Conclusions

This chapter presents the insights that were gained through the time researching the international students during their study abroad in the UK. The accounts provided by the participants highlights the on-going nature of their 'identity work'.

Study abroad is a site of identity construction. An enriched understanding of international student identity within the academic community and beyond has been provided, in which identity is seen as temporary and dynamic. By adopting a discursive lens where identity is constructed through talk, the research is able to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of international student identity. Individuals make reference to their own views of themselves (personal identity) and to how others may see them (social identity).

Such an approach avoids generalisations about international students, and furthermore shows how individuals manage to overcome the challenges they encounter during their study abroad, and how these challenges represent opportunities to revise or maintain their international student identity. Raised awareness amongst university staff and services would facilitate a revised view of the internationalisation of higher education at the individual level.

> Universities are obliged to learn much more about international students' backgrounds and needs, so as to more effectively develop the provisions they offer (Hawkes 2014:19).

Final Reflection

Students found their involvement in the study beneficial; they viewed the interviews as a time to reflect on their experiences as international students. The interviews gave students an opportunity to reflect, and a space to share their disappointments and triumphs. They were able to share their experiences of living and studying in the UK, and the process of creating new identities throughout their stay.

I have taken away from this research an increased awareness of the complexity and fluidity of international student identity. The individual accounts of ‘identity work’ have highlighted the diversity (or struggle, at times) within the international student group, even in areas where cultural characteristics appear similar.

I have also taken away from this research an increased awareness of the cultural differences that these students have had to manage, and in so doing I salute their independence, resourcefulness and resilience.

Finally, the societal dimension of the students’ identity work revealed experiences within the local community that I had not fully anticipated. The inter-related nature of the identity dimensions illustrates how social situations off-campus are an important aspect of the international student experience. Such situations should be acknowledged in terms of how the student may see themselves or how others see them, and appropriate support should therefore be offered to these students.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participation Information Sheet for Students

Aim of the Project

This doctoral research is designed to explore the experiences of international MBA students living and studying abroad.

Participation in the Case Study

This will involve exploring your experiences here through a series of semi-structured interviews.

The interviews will be informal and will be recorded for ease of transcribing the interview data, all participants will be required to compete a participants consent form (a copy of which will be given to each participant). The initial 2 interviews will be held within 2 weeks of each other, with a further 2 interviews to be held mid-stage of dissertation phase and on completion of dissertation. If students are no longer residing in [redacted] during the latter period then they may be contacted for interview via phone or skype.

All of the interviews would be arranged to suit your schedule (and mine of course!) and we can book a room at the Business and Law building during office hours, wherever would be convenient for you.

Your participation will help to improve understanding of the experiences that international students have in UK higher education, and smooth the path for future students. You will be able to access the transcribed material from your interviews by requesting this information from me via email

Research Ethics You will be under no pressure to participate in the research. You will be fully informed of the purposes and process of the research and of your right to withdraw from the study for any or no reason and at any time.

All the data obtained will be coded anonymously and will not be accessible to others. You will NOT be identified in any form of reports or publications.

Contact Details of the Investigator

Paula O'Brien Faculty of Business & Law[redacted]
email:pobrien@[redacted]

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

University of [redacted]

Business School

I …… (Name in full) give my informed consent to Paula O'Brien, Senior Lecturer at University of [redacted] to interview me as part of her doctoral research.

I confirm that I have been fully informed of the purpose of the research, the role I will play in the research as a participant, and that the data I provide will be stored safely and will be used for the purpose of the doctoral research only. The issues of Anonymity and Confidentiality have been explained and how this will be achieved.

I am aware that I am volunteering to take part in this research and that I am under no pressure to remain in the research project as a participant and that I can leave the project or the interview at any time, with no consequences. ~The information I give during the interview or my personal views will in no way jeopardise my MBA studies.

Signature of researcher…….. Date……

Signature of participant…….. Date…….

Appendix C: Ethical Approval

Our Ref: 2011/RM/
Tel: 0115 8468405
Email: louise.benham@nottingham.ac.uk
Paula Obrien
C/o School of Education

8 August 2011

Dear Paula

Please find enclosed your Statement of Research Ethics which has now been approved. Please take note of the comments from the Ethics Coordinator.

Best wishes

Janet Wilmot

Research and Centres Administrative Assistant
School Of Education
The Dearing Building
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Tel: +44 (0)115 951 4543
Fax: +44 (0)115 846 6600
www.nottingham.ac.uk/education

Head of School: Professor Christine Hall

Outcome:

Approved Revise and Resubmit

Signed: Prof Roger Murphy (Research Ethics Coordinator)

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

Name Paula O'Brien

Main Supervisor Dr Qing GU

Course of Study: EdD Lifelong Education

Title of Research Project: The Experiences of International Students Living and Studying Abroad

Is this a resubmission? No

Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office:

05/08/2011

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

Dear Paula

Thanks for your Research Ethics submission. This mostly seems fine to me. I have just made some small suggested alterations to your Participant Information Sheet. I also suggest that you add one more paragraph to that just giving participants some idea about the nature of your research. There is no need to come back to us again. Just agree any final amendments with Dr Qing Gu.

Best wishes

Professor Roger Murphy 2011/08/RM

Appendix D: Schedule of Questions (Stage 1)

1.Tell me about your decision to study in the UK

Prompts (for qualifications, enhanced employability, meet British students, get international exposure)

2. And tell me about your first few months of living here

Prompts: culture shock: climate, language, food,

3. What has been the most challenging aspect of your first few months?

Prompts: social, academic adjustment

4. How have you managed to cope?

Prompts: family, friends, other

5. Can you tell me about the differences in teaching and learning between UK and India?

Prompts: study skills, language, assessments, relationships with faculty staff and peers, support for academic issues

Appendix E: Schedule of Questions (Stage 2)

Referring to typed transcripts from interview one, students were asked

Probing strategies were employees to seek further clarification and more detail about their international student experiences

Examples included:

Using questions with “what” or “how” because they invite more detail. Questions that begin with “Do you…” or “Are you…” invite personal reflection.

Using three probe strategies such as the:

a)Silent Probe: just remain quiet and wait for informant to continue w often happens as you are busy writing what the informant has just finished saying.

b)Echo Probe: repeat the last thing an informant said and ask them to continue Asking participants to re-phrase/re-think questions and answers

c)The Uh-huh Probe: encourage participant to continue with a narrative by making affirmative noises: w “Uh-huh,” “yes, I see,” “right, uh-huh

Appendix F: Schedule of Questions (Stage 3)

See full transcript

APPENDIX G: Interview 1with Carl

(I)Tell me about your arrival in the UK

(S) Arrived 15th February, first time out of my country. Completely on my own. Not much ideas how to travel in a different country. Arrived in London with a lot of luggage. In a way I was happy, I like lot of different places […] travel.

Dark in [redacted] travelling last four hours. I faced a little difficulty to grab a place to sleep. Asked about finding a guesthouse, I asked general public. Boat restaurant guy worked on boat and rang around. Went to university security officer. My first experience when […..], small town, clean, not much chaos. I had other options Australia, Canada and USA. Indians ruled by Britishness for over 200 years so I hear of Birmingham city, Sheffield Hallam.

Scene is much clearer to me now. I am lucky. Very silent, nice infrastructures. Culture/architecture/people linked to their old culture. Not much traffic UK weather is all good. Even bright people get confused about their own culture.

They stick to their routines, ('Britisher' eats 6.30/7.30)

In London, life very fast and chaos. I moved to Delhi after high school (5 years), then to Bombay. My roots are connected to small towns, like to feel connected.

(I) What was going on for you between January and March?

(S)Things surely were different. Not experience bad experience in Lincoln. Yeah, I […….]

(I)What do you face when you are out of your country?

(S) People comment on me from very far I ignore those things in life. India is not safe for me.

(I) Can you tell me a little more about yourself

(S) I worked in industry for 5 years I can't connect what I have studied with my job. What I study here for MBA I can […….]

(I) Will you go back to India after your studies?

(S) Not sure. Even British people face problems someone joined the other day. There was a time when Britain was white….

Nowadays, lots of people come to do MBA in UK and go back. That experience doesn't really matter now as there are many good colleges/instates in India.

Some experience and then go back. This will be an add on. An extra point for me.

(I) is it competitive for you in India?

(S) Yes it will I guess. I only have 5 years' experience in the job market and MBA from here and gain a couple of years of work experience from UK. Because of course UK's market being much organised still? […….] and then go back to India now like [….] I will be carrying a lot of good experience on to me

(I) Mm

(S) And good experience…… competitive……

(I) What about the style of teaching and nature of assessments, were they different for you and how did you manage if they are different? How did you manage that change?

(S) […..] argh […..] as compared to what I have studied previously?

Before it was always like […..] even when I was doing my graduation I always used to feel, I never felt, I'm […..] argh doing graduation, […..] probably I am a graduate student. Always feel I am a high school kid, because this much is given to you so stick with this and read this and learn this, and exams will be given from this only. So basically you [……] no one had the scope to explore his/her brain limits. But now, here I find you know it's like a different thing […]

Its studies have been done so far in the past 6 [……] been done in a different fashion. They are actually [……..] tutors are [……] let us explore what we can explore. You know [argh….] own sort of research and study and it is different and it is a good actually [……..]

(I) okay, were there times when you might have felt it wasn't good or it was quite challenging?

(S) [Err.] [ummm.] I never actually felt that you know it was not good.

…challenging [……..] I'd rather call it easy, because you have your own freehand. You have your own time to research. You can find, they give us one particular topic and you have to write 4,000 words on it [……]

They give us, they set us free! We can actually do it the way we want and at the end of the day we need to justify it. So yes, not really difficult.

(I) Okay

(S) Better actually

(I) that'[s good.

So April-June was that any different from Jan-March? In terms of how you were living and studying in [redacted]?

[…….?]

(S) Yeah, [……] you go to a new place, you don't feel familiar with the place immediately but by April/June I started knowing a lot of people. […..]. I know where to shop, where to go, I was familiar with the ways. I was familiar with the city and the city timing […] when to go out and when not to go out. I was familiar with the weather […] and I was familiar with daylight when it's dark, when it's not. So yeah, I mean I started feeling a little connected and I was settling down by that time.

(I) The people you met and perhaps made friends with [….] were any of these on the MBA course or outside of the MBA course […] or […]?

(I) Both. Both. And yeah I know people from MBA course and people doing MBA course and from India and people doing MBA from different countries […] somehow I never go along with Indians very much.

(I) Was this, a conscious decision you made?

(S) No it is not a conscious decision I make [….] the conclusion I have reached before I came to the UK, it's an Indian thing. You find for {err…..} Indian guys together and you know 1 or 2 of them will find a whistle-blower. Which I don't like because I am so far from my country and there are a handful of Indian guys […] and within those people you will find people like that [….] you just think what am I doing here, what am I doing with these people and I could learn […] lot more things and cultures I can meet I can do happy talks all the way throughout the day so why get into things like that.

(I) YOU used the term 'whistle-blower' a few moments ago, could you describe what [……..]?

(S) Someone who is [……..] a link between 2 guys in a negative way. Like if you discuss a problem with me in a confidential way and I just completely make fun out of it, in front of somebody else. It creates a misunderstanding between you and somebody else [….] the connection between you and (S) they talk productive […] and they are not bothered about people's personal life and [….] they [err…..] one thing I notice they are very much, they know what they have to do. They have known in next half an hour they know what they have to do and they are quite, they stick to it, call it rigid or whatever.

(I) is that very different from what you are used to?

(S) Yes it is different

(I) Can you explain how…?

(S) In my society, people - everyone will try and influence your life through own thoughts or ways. Here I don't see that. People experiment [ ] with [….] on someone else's life and […..] my friend you should do this, and [….] my friend you should do that. If you want to do it, then do it.

(I) Does that happen a lot in India? Why do Indian people do it?

(S) Rather than trying getting friends they influence you with their own thoughts. Not good listeners […] they talk and talk and that have some impact on the people in front of me

I have just ridden back from my home, was there for 10 days and after 10 days, I was not sick of it but sick of it

(I) Being at home?

(S) Because things I dislike you know was evolving around me for past ten days and those ten days. Very independent here. I am used to living an independent life and being away from home for last ten years as I mentioned, so I reached back here and I was feeling more relaxed and easy

(I) Mmm

(S) And [redacted] is fine

(I) what plans do you have for your dissertation?

(S)Some people said they will leave others stay. Others go off…..After the classes are over I am thinking of getting a job. Yeah. So I can maintain my own food and shelter, my living expenditures because UK is expensive for me. And so far I have been taking money off my family, which I really don't appreciate now

So, Lincoln has a problem of employment [….] if I get a job in [redacted] I would be really happy to stay in [redacted]. If I don't get a job then I'll have to move then. I wouldn't be really happy.

(I) Okay, go back to the beginning and how you applied for your visa and issues earlier on in that time period

(I) About whom you trust…..?

(S) It's not really about trust for me. O keep my things very confidential [….] I mean its 10 years since I lived outside my parents, so I don't really care whether people like my ways […] the way I live my life […] yes of course I don't like people, but I don't even, mind talk about me behind my back but don't come up with a conclusion on your own. That is what I wouldn't like. Yeah.

(I) How did you meet other people? Meet other UK people? And did you meet them off the MBA course, socially?

(S) I [err] a couple of guys I met in the pub or something, a couple I know through a connection. Yeah, and I enjoy their company sometimes

(I) Yeah

(S) I actually, [……] my parents wanted me to go out and study somehow [….] this […..] fascinated me. Last couple of years, things were not going well! And err [….] on a professional level and err […] I mean last one year I tried to run a business as well. My own trading firm and so it didn't go very well and I was sitting at home doing nothing and getting depressed.

Then suddenly one day my younger brother came up with this thought and go out and study abroad. So my parents were like [….] why don't you go, if he can think of such a thing, why don't you go!

Actually took then couple of weeks making up my mind if should go and then yes. Then one day it was end of November and it was raining and so it will be fine and I will go out for studies […} process [….] on my own.

Finally I got my visa but [……]/

Interview 2: Carl

(I) Hello welcome to the second interview. Can we start with talking about the universities you applied to?

(S) You mean which […]

(I) Why apply to those, why were those important to you?

(S) You see for UK there are two intakes in a year. The first is September intake and second is January intake.

(I) Yeah

(S) September is the original intake but I had already missed September intake. Because I decided come to UK in November right. I was left with January intake. I was relying on my consultant and my uncle living here in London. So according to them Birmingham City and Sheffield Hallam, and [err] [err] Wales, Cardiff those were the decent size universities. No one had ever heard about the University of [redacted]. But then my [err] I was going through 2 different consultants. The University of [redacted] I decided to go to UK pretty late. I literally had no time to decide. Apart from this I got an offer from Uni of Bedfordshire but everyone declined it and said it was not a good university. So comparatively it was sounding good to me, so that is how I decided. I got an offer letter from Sheffield Hallam but they were offering me MSc in Business Studies, you can get teaching profession or something like

(I) Okay

(S) So I was not really interested in that. It meant me having a professional experience [err] like in my life an err, so I mean of course all in all that how I decided the University of [redacted]

(I) Okay. And in terms of studying an MBA in India or MBA in the UK, why did you want to study abroad?

(S) [……..] err, you see [err] one first reason was since the day I because since the day I was graduated in 2005, since that day […….] my parents wanted me to study abroad. So that was their dream you could say and […..] err, that was one of the major reasons. Apart from that, for the past couple of years things have not been pretty lucky with me in India. So my parents thought a change of place might bring in some good luck because I was really working hard on a couple of project. Nothing was taking off.

(I) mmm

(S) So like you know a change of fairer place, call it a superstition, but that it was they thought. So if we just send him away from us, from his people, from the people he is around, from his friends and all. So probably he can learn something more and [err]

(I)Yeah, so your parents had a dream about you coming study in UK, it was their sort of dream? Where does that dream come from?

(S) I [err] I am a footwear designer as I mentioned earlier as well [….] so [….] when I did this you see most of the people your, you see it was an undergrad course. Perhaps of student you would go to Paris or Milan. So they actually thought of sending me to Paris or Milan when I graduated, but then from last and 3 years I was completely away from footwear industry. You can say that I was completely out of touch. And […] it was hard, hard lesson always competitively. So, I going again for the designing thing was pretty a practical idea because I was doing something else. But yes you know again, yes fine not for footwear but for something else. Send him away. Send him away overseas for studies.

(I) Did you have any friends who studied as well abroad?

(S) Yes I have many friends who have studies [err, err] abroad. One in USA, UK, friends have studied in Paris, Prague [err] many places. Yeah

Interview 3: Carl

(I) The first question is really, 'Can you tell me about the past eight months. What has been happening? You would have started different classes; you would have started the dissertation

(S) Yeah, well [….], last seven or eight months was quite stressful I'd say, because [err…], we had [….] the dissertation as one part of it. Then I got engaged, another stress in getting engaged [smiles]. In India you are only married for the good, for the rest of your life, you know!

(I) Mmm. Mmm.

(S) And [err….], then of course you mean, you know [err….] things you [….], I don't know what you call it in the UK, it's like I got engaged so I've got more
responsibilities now. So to fulfil the responsibilities I need to take a serious job because now I have to run a family. So yeah, in that way it was stressful.

(I) Yeah.

(S) Pretty much happening when I went back home. Stayed there for almost three months, had a good time with my parents after a very long time. Yeah, and I didn't want to come back to UK. Yeah, I was just in the whole vibe of being back home, being with parents,

(I) Did you settle back in quickly?

(S) Yes. [……..].

(I) I remember when you went back before, you were only there for a short while.

(S) Yes, yes. […..]. yes, yeah.

(I) Yeah.

(S) Initially my stay was at home for around 40 days but I just kept stretching it. Yeah. I was thrown out of the home! My parents they said 'you have to go back now'. Yes, so I came back.

(I) Mmm

(S) Yes, that is how it is.

(I) So was the engagement planned? Did you know that would be happening in your Masters' year or was that […….?]

(S) It wasn't! It's like getting married in India is very necessary. It is a social thing that you have to, have to do. If you are not married by mid-life, people might call you out-cast. Yeah. Or you probably not acceptable beyond an age.. I'm only 29 this July. So, even marriage it depends on age factors. So, for me, for my parents it was high-time to settle down. So, I mean I wasn't being told about it because marriage is one thing that always scares me the most. Yeah. Yeah. So when I went back home they tried to convince me actually, and then we started finding a girl. It is an arranged marriage, so yeah we find this girl through matrimony site, and that is how it happened.

(I) So, initially you had gone home initially to see the parents?

(S) Yes. Yes, because I thought I didn't have classes anymore and I thought, I am going to do my dissertation whilst living back at home and I will spend some good time with my parents. So that was the initial plan.

(I) So do you want to tell me a little more about the dissertation. Sort of how you chose your topic, how you got your supervisor, and then obviously you were going back. So you were going to be studying there and doing it,

(S) I [err……] studied in my second semester four subjects: strategy, ethics, and [err….] export marketing and consultancy. Maybe that was a wrong decision or whatever.

(I) Mmm.

(S) But I chose to do my dissertation on entrepreneurship. I. I wanted to understand entrepreneurship. The reason behind this is, some point in life I would like to do something on my own, start e venture or something. So that, was the reason behind it. Of course, I didn't choose the tutor we were assigned the tutor by the university.

So I was in touch with my tutor through SKYPE and emails, and he was giving me constant feedback.

(I) How did that work? Was it easy to work with? Was it a different type of studying from having lectures and studying and seminar, and being with other people?

(S) Yes [….].

(I) So [….]

(S) [Err….] that was [err….] absolutely a new experience, difficult of course. I, I had no idea what the target was and what the end result is going to be. So you are absolutely freezed and paused. You don't know how to proceed further. So it was quite […….]. Of course it was a research study and I had never done a research study so it was difficult. And I'd [……] didn't have access to library. So mostly I was depending on e-library and you know e-journals and google books. Then, yes I you know was having sessions with my tutor on SKYPE but sometimes you know, but most of the time my tutor was on leave. He was not available, or the times don't match. And there is a time difference also.

(I) Was that the Christmas period, he was on leave […….]?

(S) No he was on leave during the Christmas period, he was on leave sometime in January again. He was on leave some time in November. So maybe something was going on [……]. Yes it was a bit difficult, yeah we tried to manage things.

(I) So what was the most difficult bit or what was actually difficult, because you are saying you didn't have any experience […….]. Did you feel you were totally dependent on the supervisor?

(S) The most difficult thing again was, as I said 'it is not mathematics where you have to find the final answer and especially [err….] you [err….]. I didn't really study [……], so I didn't know the tools and techniques of it [….]. My supervisor of course cannot check with me after 2 hours and give me a proper lecture. He can just say show me what you have done and I will give some feedback. It was very difficult for me and as I said there were times when I absolutely paused like 'I don't know what to do next'.

(I) Did you contact any of your friends? Or people you were studying with, to ask them if they had similar experiences or advice?

(S) No I didn't! I didn't because I started working on my dissertation way before them and they were [….], they were eased out in [redacted] as they had access to the tutor, library, to all the resources they required. I was really not in touch with anyone when I was back home.

(I) So was that a conscious decision not to get in touch with anybody? Because I know from previous discussions that you know that other students have been a source of support for assessments, assignments […..] when you are studying.

(S) Argh [……..]. We had [….] classmates, we have together also. My method of study in matters of study is different. Yeah, if I had [….] to study then I have a set time. I'll reach to library at this time, and [….] this time. And I don't want to get over pressurized. I would like to finish my work. They are the people who like to work under pressure. So, [….], so that was one reason for not getting in touch. [….] and [err….] anything is I was too much [….]. I was just [….] emptying my mind and emptying my space. Sure, a lot of people [….] and see many of my friends in India. This is probably [err….] the kind of thing that I did, cos, I like to be around friends, yeah. So I almost, locked myself in the house with my parents and my study and that is it!

(I) Okay, and what do you think are the main differences between that bit for you, the taught bit and then the dissertation? So if you had to say what were the main differences between them, teaching, seminars and then you going through the dissertation? What would you say are the main differences?

(S) You see when we have classes going on, lectures are, are get to learn some tools, to do some kind of work. So it's like fifty, fifty. 50% in our effort, 50% in our tutor's effort. You know who is teaching us in the class but then [err….] when you start dissertation it's not the same thing, and mostly it is you and you get the feedback. So that is the difference.

(I) Mmm. Mmm. And what do you think someone might feel when they are having to sort of work in that way. What emotions do you think they go through?

(S) Always stressed, most of the time always stressed.

(I) Mmm. What do you think the cause of the stress is?

(S) The cause of the stress is because you have a target date when you have to hand your work and on the other hand you are always stuck with your research most of the time. You know things are moving very slowly. Like I went back home, I reached home on 24th November and I had targeted I would finish my dissertation by 31 December or a little before that. But by the 31st December I realised that things are not moving again, And then I finish my work by 10th January, and 10th of January also came and the work was too slow.

(I) How did you decide December was going to be your finish date? What did you base that calculation on?

(S) [Laughs …….]. I don' know whether it was the right calculation or not but usually when you make an assignment we [err….], I generally put two to four days on that assignment, a maximum five days. And the assignment is says 4,000 words. Dissertation you have to submit 18,000 words and I multiplied that.

(I) Multiplied. Yeah.

(S) It is not entirely different than making an assignment but that's what I thought.

(I) Okay and [err…..] what are your plans? Today you have just found out you have got some of your grades back and you found out your dissertation is 2% below the pass mark […..]. So do you want to talk a little about that?

(S) [Laughs]

(I) In the context of your plans [….], or how you are feeling about that?

(S) I'm blank, I'm absolutely blank. Yes, as me I was not expecting me to fail, this is probably the first time I have literally put my heart and soul in my work.

(I) Mmm

(S) Cos, I am not vey studious person, and I don't, I'm not book smart. I'm [……]. This is the first time you know I decided I'm […]. I know I was not going to study any further after I finish my Masters'. So this is probably the last chance I will have to study and to examine myself and to get examined. So […], so I thought of doing it, and you know give my best and I did. I did a lot of hard work on it. But, that I was not expecting to fail.

(I) Mmm.

(S) I never had high hopes, me earning 65, 66 or 70 but I[…], even failing was not in the plan, in the back of my mind. So I was always assuming that I have passed, and I had plans according to that. So when I apply for PSW and [err….], [err….] to be honest even my marriage was based on it you know!

(I) On passing, the MBA?

(S) Yes, so […….]

(I) Do you want to explain what you mean by that.

(S) Argh […..] when two families become one in India, the marriage is a big thing, a big thing. It is a matter of social prestige and a matter of personal development and expanding the family. One you are married .Then you are married for good. And then you are going to spend the rest of your life with that person. So, the marriages in India depend on many factors. Study is the first factor. How much qualified the person is.

(I) Mmm, is that for both female and the male?

(S) Yes, for female and the male. It depends on level of society. If you are on the lowest level then things are different, highest level things are different. So, I belong to a middle level family. Yeah. So the middle level family values are [err….] a bit tight you say. We are service based economy. Yeah, we run on jobs. So the qualification, that is why it is the important thing, and then how settled the boy is. Back in India everyone has a notion that if you are in a western country you are more secured. That is another thing. So, […]

(I) Is that financially?

(S) Yes financially, of course, because of, because of the exchange rate.

(I) Mmm

(S) £1 cost us 80 rupees. So [….]. Yes so when we were searching for a bride for me, so these things were highlighted points about me and my MBA. I had submitted my dissertation, so he is living in UK that was the first catch for them.

(I) Mmm

(S) So, as with me everything was set I was applying for jobs, I was getting a couple of replies, professional jobs, I am talking about proper MBA jobs. And now since I have failed everything has just crashed for the moment, and I guess my visa was depending on MBA. I cannot apply for PSW. I cannot get a job.

(I) Have you spoken [….]?

(S) and I don't get a job.

(I) Have you spoken to [….]?

(S) I know it is not possible to stay in this country for one year?

(I) I know you mentioned you have had a meeting {with XXXX] prior to this interview today.

(S)Yeah

(I) And umm [….].so the university is unable to do anything regarding the dissertation? Is that what the situation is?

(S) I [err….], the university part I cannot say anything. They took the decision, they gave me 48, failing by 1%, 2% is heartbroken.

(I) Mmm

(S) I'm heartbroken. If I had got 40 marks or 45 marks then it is justified, but this is whether [….] where you don't have a fixed target and deciding one or two marks, I don't know. But that is what my tutor deterred and that is their criteria.

(S) So did {XXX] mention anything about condoning a pass or anything like that? Or what the procedure is? Or what the regulations are? Did she explain?

(S) If anyone fails?

(I) Yes

(S) So far it is just a fail. I'm not worried about my degree because I can always re-submit my work, you know get my degree.

(I) Mmm

(S) That is why it is just a fail you know. Yeah. The uni must be thinking the student he can always pass.

(I) Mmm. But I suppose in your situation an international student, who is dependent on PSW visa it caused a lot more impact than just failing [….]?

(S) Yes, now that is the whole problem. That is the actual problem

(I) So the deadline for applications [….]?

(S) 1st of April

(I) Just a little more than a week

(S) But today is 27th, 28th

(I) So about 10 days time?

(S) Yeah. So let's say I'm not really sure what I am going to do or planned yet. I got this, this morning so I don't really know. I'm actually wondering to call my parents and tell them this has happened.

(I) Mmm.

(S) I'm sure, they did see me working hard, day and night on my dissertation but if that is justified then that is good!

(I) So has [[redacted]] given you any advice? Does she know you are applying for Work Study visa?

(S) Yes, of course. Yeah [….] What advice could, even expect in this sort of situation?

(I) Mmm.

(S) What can […] give me? All she can say is if you can always reappear. Yes. I don't know how much is in her hand.

(I) So there is no way you can resubmit for example?

(S) I asked if I could maybe some changes and resubmit and she explained it is a board thing and the next board will come in June. Resubmitting my work, immediately doesn't help.

(I) Mmm.

(S) I can always resubmit whenever I want but, the result won't come.

(I) The impact mmm […]. Okay, so umm obviously it's quite a difficult day for you?

(S) Yes it is. One of the most miserable days of my life.

(I) Mmm. Obviously you have just found out. You collected some other marks? […]

(S) Consultancy result, we forgot to collect them.

(I) How do you fell about your other marks that you got in your second semester?

(S) I failed one assignment in the second semester, and actually most of us that was the ethics. [XXXX] was the tutor. He's a great tutor actually. So err […] that and I got 46 or something, Strategies I got 64, then Export Marketing I got 59, and yeah consultancy it was group work and we got 55.56. So I decided fine, and rest of previous marks myself as a poor student. Not a very intelligent one but absolutely […].

(I) If I asked you to explain what you mean by your term intelligent what would you say? What do you think of when you say “I’m not intelligent”?

(S) About me?

(I) nods

(S) I have grasped things very fast.

(I) Mmm

(S) Okay, even you, you would notice that I was probably the most in class, I would come with questions. Now, how stupid or intelligent those questions were, that is a different. So I understand things fast, I, my patience, I have very less patience in terms of sitting and studying for hours, for long hours. So that is where I lack. I cannot just sit and keep doing things, doing things for a couple of hours. So that is where I lack. And I am very lazy in writing stuff and all. But I do understand. But the knowledge that comes on certificates [….], but the knowledge that comes from college and into discussion, I can do that.

(I) How do you think you have changed? You have been here nearly 12 months now, over 12 months.

(S) Yeah

(I) So how do you think you have changed? Sort of as a person or on a personal level, you’ve changed [….]? Is there anything you have noticed about yourself? You talk about personal development [….]

(S) I have calmed down more in life. It is very tough situation for me today. But, still I [….], you know I’m managing to keep my calm. If it was me, in early days I do not know what I would be doing at this time [laughs]. Anything wrong but very restless and running here and there wasting my energy. I guess I have started understanding things more, even from the others’ perspective.

(I) Mmm.

(S) You know

(I) Other people? Is that classmates, when you were here? Or just family? Or?

(S) I have started listening more. I have starting analysing things. Yeah.

(I) How do you think that has come about? Is it because you have studied abroad? Or?

(S) Argh [……], you can say that as one factor. I can tell you because I have been living away from my parents for the last 10 years. Yeah, last 10 years, because they live in a different state, I worked in a different state, so distance was pretty far.

So, sorry [mobile phone vibrates]. I just keep them there [referring to phone].
Yeah, people are constantly messaging me asking me what the result is.

(I)Mmm. Mmm.

(S) and I really not sure what am I going to say.

(I) Yeah, as you said you need to clear your head.

(S) Yeah, of course I'm not going to lie to them. So yeah where we? So I was still in my country

(I) Mmm

(S) and [….], you know, no matter how far for me are you or living in a country, you still have that sense of security, back in your mind, that you are always have reach to things if you fall in to bad situation. [….] and [….] and I always, to be honest very much chilled out people so far in my life. I call myself very, I don't keep things back in my mind, I don't hold grudges and that's the kind of people I have met and made excellent friends. And, err [….] people who really don't care about small, small things. Even if you are living together, so I have, as compared to my previous flatmates they are wonderful people, and they are friends for the lifetime. When I came here maybe it was age difference when I came here I was almost 28 and people who came were 22/23 so [….] they, they were in a different world, I was living in a different world. And [….] people that I experienced here were not a very wonderful experience. They are something else on the face. They, they, not the [….] British people I am talking about, I am here talking about the Indians and that. People you know coming from different, coming from their home, and probably they were out for the first time. Most of them I had never seen such over smart people. Then they are definitely not live in a free world [laughs], where you don't hold grudges and where you are not bothered about small, small things. They are helpful to your friends. People who are very different here, didn't have […].

(I) Are you saying they weren't very tolerant? The people that you met, the Indians that you met?

(S) Yeah. Here? Yeah. Tolerant means?

(I) Tolerance means […..]

(S) More patience?

(I) Yeah, that they weren't very patient.

(S) No, I'm not saying that [….]. They are [….] more, more than a nice friend. They always wanted to be politically correct, and always wanted to be on the safer side.

(I) Mmm

(S) And you know stubborn, not flexible even. I guess when you become friends you are flexible with that person.

(I) So, are you trying to say that didn't change, they brought India with them. Is that what you are trying to say?

(S) And, no. From which part of India they are I have not seen that. You see when I came here I was living away from my home and I'm used to many things like, I don't care if you don't want cook 3 meals in a day, and I cook for myself or for 2 or 3 people, it doesn't make any difference to me. You open my cupboard; you touch my things I don't care. You know because I stayed in a hostel for 3 year, and you know how hostels are.

(I) Mmm

(S) So [….] you, you need some help I will run for you even in the midnight. I have done it, I have experienced it. I have seen people running for me; it's that kind of culture. People here

were not the same of course not. They always want to save yourself first, if your friend is in trouble it is better that you are don't jump in first.

(I) So they are more self-centred?

(S) Yes, more self-centred yeah.

(I) Mmm, okay. And the last time we met we talked about […….]?

(S) […..] and even this morning I will say that when my result came out, I was sitting with 3 or 4 friends I get a cold reaction what do you [……..], I didn't even get a cold reaction from you. In India, my Indian friends have been asking my result each day from last one week.

(I) Mmm

(S) Each day they message me what happened about your result, let me know about your result. I'm not sure how I'm going to tell them also. My friends, they will feel very bad.

(I) I was surprised, because I didn't know

(S) I thought you had passed, judging on the marks you have had

(S) Yeah

(I) You know I was very surprised. You probably caught the reaction that I was very surprised

(S) Okay, I always wanted to know from you this thing. You of course found out in your assignment what I did.
(I) Mmm

(S) One or two of the paragraphs were copied

(I) Mmm

(S) One of the reasons for was we don't need to discuss it again, but otherwise how would you judge my assignment?

(I) I would say in terms of your [err….], the [ ] just in terms of your assignment, what you did was a mistake and a lot of students do it. So it is a common [….] you know [….] and with international students they do, do it because they are not used to studying in that way. It was one of your first assignments, and students sometimes stumble on it by error, they do it by error, or they are under that much stress and pressure, that's what happens

(S) Mmm. Mmm.

(I) But, it's like what you said. In the classroom you are always articulate, you know what was going on, you asked questions and you had the benefit of work experience, and a lot of the students in your group didn't have, few had experience

(S) Mmm

(I) But there wasn't lots of people who had experience sort of there. There were some quite quiet students.

(S) Yeah, yes.

(I) But you would always ask a question which was good for me as a teacher, because I can respond and probably help those sorts of students

(S) Sure.

(I) Certificate level, for me is like the starting blocks.

(S) So how would you judge that assignment?

(I) Umm!

(S) I'm sure you won't remember the whole of it now.

(I) I won't remember the whole of it now, but what final mark did you […..]?

(S) You had to put a cap on it

(I) But otherwise, umm, I think it was a reasonable assignment. I think it was reasonable, it wasn't brilliant.

(S) It wasn't brilliant

(I) It was reasonable, and I have seen worse where people have out rightly failed. You know, where they have had 20-25, and it has been a great shock. You say, it's not like mathematics but you know you have had the experience along with other international students where you, your studying and the method of assessment is by memory, tests, exams. It is very different way of studying and being assessed here. I think it is such a big learning curve.

(S) Yes

(I) Yes huge learning curve. And, umm I think the potential was there, and definitely from some of your second semester marks your potential was there, and your capability.

(S) And I failed [laughs]

(I) But look at the mark you got in strategic management, that is a very high mark

(S) Yeah

(I) Extremely high mark. But yeah I share your disappointment I do. But it is difficult because I know you have only just found out, and I know it is difficult for you, that you have just fund out and there must be a lot of disappointment.

(S) Yeah!

(I) … because of all the other stuff you have placed at your feet or on your shoulders you know. Or the other responsibilities and even if you weren't engaged you will still have had the, you know […] the application for PSW visa, you might still have applied for that.

(S) Yeah, the thing is my father is retiring from his job soon. So I'm got a younger brother

(I) Mmm.

(S) So, basically after my father I am the caretaker of the family, and if I don't do well, then my family won't do well.

(I) So it is a lot of responsibility?

(S) It is a lot of responsibility

(I) Compared to 12 months ago when you came.

(S) Yeah, my mum was expecting now good things to happen.

(I) Mmm.

(S) My family was going through a very tough period; I would say last 10 or 15 years, or even more than that. So now they were expecting some good things to happen. Yeah.

(I) I think we talked in the last interview about err superstition or didn't know if superstition or not. But they thought that going to a new place [….].

(S) Yes, yes, yes

(I) Yeah

(S) Yeah

(I) So, it's brought some luck? Because you nearly, [….] but you can't apply for the PSW visa, but you still got the positive thing?

(S) I don't know if it has brought positive or not, you see PSW visa is the most important thing for me, because the rest of my plans, my everything is dependent upon it. So if I don't get that I don't have a plan B.

(I) Mmm

(S) You know [….]

(I) Mmm.

(S) I can always go back to home. My return wouldn't be a glamorous one it would be one of shame

(I) Okay

(S) Failing in our, our in class, in course back in India is a very shameful thing. So far I have never failed in my school, in my college. If I failed and this word got spread then, it is so shameful that even my parents would stop taking phone calls.

(I) Mmm.Mmm

(S) …from other people, it is like that.

(I) Mmm, mmm. So going back home, this factor of failing and just that part, you have passed everything else on the MBA,
(S) All that matters is getting the degree.

(I) So In June you will get the degree?

(S) Yes in June, but my, as everybody knows all my relatives, society is a big thing in India you cannot [ ]. I am supposed to get married in September

(I) Of this year?

(S) 22nd of September, so I'm not on a very big marriage but almost 1500 people are going to come. So [….] it is not a big marriage but you know that many people do not come, and then it is not a very nice wedding. So society is a huge thing in India.

(I) Mmm.

(S) And yeah, most of the things you do, no half the things you in your life you do for personal satisfaction. Harder things you do to keep a good name in society.

(I) So would you say that people because of the shame factor, people would be critical.

(S) Yes very critical, they will probably start making assumption. People, people change their tongue very immediately. Yeah. If I pass everyone would say of course we always had confidence [[redacted]] brilliant guy, he was facing a rough time. Now, they come and they says we always know he was no good, in life, blah, blah, blah, and parents would have to listen to that.

(I) Mmm

(S) I love my parents. I don't want to trouble them at all. Yeah.

(I) But come sure when that's resubmitted, or resubmitted before June you will get our MBA.

(S) You see that is one thing, it is better that you don't spread the word, until I have passed and resubmit my work and get my degree but that's okay. But as I say, everybody knows, so that is how I started, everybody knows I'M in UK for 2 to 3 years and that I'm going to work there. And being in a western country being an Indian, to be honest is a very prestigious thing. It is very respected. People treat you in a fancy way. I don't know why honestly because when I came here I realised okay it's a better world definitely but why people are treating me different after I came to UK. So now they know I am going to be in UK, work for 2 or 3 years, this is what I keep to everybody, I will come back. So I say like 'this is not the case'. I love India as well, I don't dislike UK but India is my home. It is where I was born, brought up and my parents won't shift to UK for the rest of their lives because their life will be a mess and they have a life. Even they are old now they cannot develop things and start from zero. So if I, if I go back to India immediately people will talk, and when people talk it is a bad thing.

(I) So how long can you stay now?

(S) Until August, that is when my visa expires.
(I) So, you could actually apply for some part-time jobs anyway and finish the dissertation?

(S) Yeah, and anyway [….]

(I) I imagine [….]

(S) I told you about my marriage and what were the catches so being here was the major one, and anyway my visa finishes in August and marriage is in September, it doesn't match.

(I) Mmm

(S) Even if my visa was being expired by next January I could even have brought my wife here for a couple of months. Then I could have convinced her let's go back home it's done, that's all it is.

(I) So at the minute the plans are to stay until August you think?

(S) No idea. I don't think I will stay here until August. I mean if nothing is working out then I will probably go back and find a decent job instead of staying here until August.

(I) I mean […] is quite difficult the other students have said, to find jobs sort of here.

(S) Finding a job in [….] is very hard. Anyway, you could always move to London.

(I)You have an uncle is it there? Did you say?

(S) Yes, but I haven't met them yet.

(I) Mmm.

(S) I haven't been to that place. London again is much difficult that [redacted] and honestly I'M not liking that city, I love being in [redacted] it is so calm. Nice but the job is the problem. And, even after that I'm getting married in September I have 6 months to do something and to save something. So if I go back in August I had no time even to find a job and getting married without a job is no good for an Indian.

(I) Yeah

(S) It's a shameful thing actually

(I) A lot of pressure on you then?

(S) A lot of pressure, a lot of pressure.

(I) Okay, we will leave it there.

(S) Yeah.

(I) Cheers

Appendix H: Analysis Coding Criteria

General Categories for identity are:-

Individual Relational Organisational Societal

These are not mutually exclusive, and what is more there is necessarily some overlap

I have made an attempt at coding these down into sub-categories and then decoded the sub-categories using the criteria shown in the (brackets) to select and organise the data

INDIVIDUAL:

A. Daily life adjustment Issues: (accommodation/food/language proficiency/financial/safety/weather/clothes to wear)

B. Well-being issues: (distress/overwhelm/acculturation stress/home-sick/isolate)

C. Personal Development /Growth: (open-minded/mature/ extravert/introvert/self-perception/tolerant/calm/confident

D. Integration Issues: (with new and old culture/motives/cultural competency/pride/cognitive dissonance

E. Learning issues: (independent learner/learning styles cultural learner/ experiential learning)

RELATIONAL

A. Need for the social support network (emotional support/doubt/frustration/lonely/uncertainty/guidance in academic support/daily functioning)

B. Nature of the social support network: (formal/informal/hierarchy within the support/diversity)

C. Benefits of social support network: (belonging/connectedness/emotional stability)

D. Maintenance of the social support network (personal needs/obligation to parents/obligation to peers/national pride/maintain cultural identity/regulation of the network by members))

ORGANISATIONAL

A. Academic Integration (adjustment period/level of awareness of new system/previous experiences/trial and error/experiential learning/expectations in classroom/assignments/dissertation/learning by making mistakes)

B. Organisational Social Integration: (nature of student cohort/student union/programme/student services/international office/formal or informal opportunities)

C. Time issues: (perceptions about dissertation/preparing for assessment/length of course/nature of course/work/punctuality in old and new culture commitments

D. Academic Support (tutors/programme leader/ supervisor/nature of support/availability of support/approachability of staff/admin staff etc.)

SOCIETAL

A. Adjusting to new society (adapting to new cultural habits and customs/ethnic loyalty/national identity)

B. Interaction with host society/local community: (frequency and depth of interaction (or choose to avoid)

C. Identification with host society: (perceived identification with English speaking culture/ western values/perceived prejudice/perceived discrimination/perception of being different/ cultural learning/experiential)

D. Tensions between host society and country of origin (collective vs. individualist/parental control/marriage/traditional beliefs/gender roles etc.

Appendix I: Sample of Category Coding (derived by author)

	Individual	Relational	Organisational	Societal
Participant A	"..It was first time out of my country, so I [err...] reached the UK and I [err….] I was completely on my own! … [and err…..] Yes I actually had not much idea about [err….] how to travel in a different country..."		"..I rather call it easy because you have your own free-hand you have your own time to research. You can find, they give us one particular topic and you have to write 4,000 words..."	"It is their culture; I don't want to change…"
Participant B		"..I live with other Asians in private accommodation with them…" "I can't establish wider network because of cultural restrictions, would have change lifestyle. …So [….] friends just say hi to…."	"…we not use the library in India, no need….." "Final presentation is totally different..."	
Participant C		"..Relatives collected me from the		

Participant D				
Participant E	"..Um, not managing well. I can't say I'm not managing well because I live with my auntie (my mum's sister.) because food and all it's not a problem for me..."	"Mm... they also used to encourage me they didn't say like come back while you are feeling like that. My dad and mum used to tell me, you have to see through the hard life as well. You can't always be very soft and always be with your parents, you have to go outside and you have to learn in world that is what they say to me…"		
Participant F				

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