Overseas Doctoral Students' Identity Evolution

Submitted by Ying Ying Nikko Hsiang to the University of Exeter
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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research follows narrative enquiry principles and explores the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. The research argues for the legitimacy of the concept that views identity as a state that evolves over time and across space as it undergoes ambivalence and emancipation (Bhabha 2004; Hall, 1990; Rutherford, 1990). The inquiry was informed by the data collected from in-depth interviews of eight overseas doctoral students from seven nationalities, three academic disciplines, and at different stages in their Ph.D. research. They were individually interviewed four times with an interval of three months in between from 2011 to 2012. The narratives concerning their learning and living experience, interpreted in the light of academic, personal, social, and cultural and national aspects of life, contextualise the participants and reveal their identity evolution and hybrid identities. Findings address dynamics of the Ph.D. journey, supervisory issues, socio-economic factors, national and cultural identities developed overseas, change over time and across space, and impact of being involved in this study. These findings reveal that the overseas doctoral students' doctoral journey is extraordinary in that it reflects a period of time that is dynamic and destabilizing; it can pose the risk of a loss of cultural identity; it can be transactional; it reveals the family as a strong support system; it illustrates that global awareness is fluid that the social life can undergo ambivalence and emancipation from social codes and cultural norms, and that hybrid identities have various forms. The implications of this study are that there is no linear progression in identity evolution, that being empowering is not always the result of hybrid identities, that a past-present-future dynamic emerges to facilitate identity evolution, and that an overseas doctoral education is part of a personal life spectrum. My study underscores the value of the role of a holistic supervisor that unifies the roles of a mentor and an advisor; indicates that Ph.D. host institution is advised to see overseas doctoral students as more than 'students' but as whole persons developing under different circumstances; and, problematises the notion of objectivity in conducting a research study such as this one in which the advantage of empathy outweighs the risks of subjectivity. I distinguished between

what I found to be particular to overseas students as compared to observations that I found to be applicable to all doctoral students. While Ph.D. phases, student-Ph.D. relationship, additional requirements and work during the Ph.D. process, supervisor issues, and identity presentation, shifts, and management were indicative of the general doctoral students' learning and living experiences, writing concerns, socio-economic factors that involved home country situations, friendship sought in a different context, socio-cultural adjustment, and cultural and national identities were signposts of the doctoral student with overseas status. Most importantly, my study suggests that overseas doctoral students are distinct and worth studying and their identities were responsible for a myriad of situations for them to evolve.

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My overseas doctoral journey has been very positive throughout. It would not have been the case without the help of many and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to them.

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I am deeply grateful to my family that has been a strong source of support. We did not see each other for more than four years. Despite the fact that I have missed birthdays, weddings and funerals, and in many other aspects, I have not been there for them, they have been tolerant, understanding, and have, none the less, offered me their unconditional love.

I am indebted to my aunt and several others who believed in me to the point that they were willing to loan me money so that my overseas doctoral education could be accomplished. Without their financial support and generosity, my journey would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

A series of studies focusing on doctoral students' everyday life have shed light on the importance of making the once unreported lived experiences explicit so as to understand how these individuals perceive and feel about such a journey (Hopwood, Alexander, Harris-Huemmert, McAlpine & Wagstaff, 2011; Jazvac-Martek, Chen & McAlpine, 2011; Turner, McAlpine & Hopwood, 2012). Researchers conducting these studies highly emphasize that nuanced and mundane encounters merit how doctoral students view themselves (Hall & Burns, 2009; McAlpine, 2012a; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2012). In other words, it is suggested that identity is tightly connected to different aspects of life. I seek to conduct an exploratory research focusing on overseas doctoral students' learning and living experiences to examine how their identities evolve. Trust and lengthy involvement help me to trace their development. As a result, their experiences in every aspect of life can inform how their identities evolve.

As more and more students pursue higher education overseas, there is a need to explore what these students are faced with in terms of their studies and everyday life. These students need to cope with differences in culture, language, social life patterns, and ways of interaction. Their choice is either to adapt or preserve old patterns in a new context. At doctoral level higher education institutions tend to focus on academic and linguistic capacity. They overlook the changing emotional and intellectual landscapes inhabited by their students. In such a setting, I recognize overseas doctoral students as a particular group of individuals who have interesting stories and experiences to tell. Educators in higher education and intercultural education may find their experiences valuable when designing educational programmes and student services.

I argue that centring on 'process' helps grasp the evolutionary journey of overseas doctoral students. This way, factors that are influential to the students' identities and implications of the changes in identity are brought to light. My

intention is to trace how their identities are negotiated in the cross-cultural context. In so doing, this study seeks to bring the "hidden realities" to the foreground (Hopwood *et al.*, 2011, p. 214; Turner *et al.*, 2012, p. 16).

1.1. A Locally Inspired Research Interest

According to the university, I am a postgraduate research student. As 'a student', I am expected to live in a student accommodation that is equipped with low quality furniture; accept comments from local people about how fluent my English is; and, get used to having my opinions reduced to cultural differences by some staff. Despite being in a different country, I, nevertheless, continue to make sense of life. This ongoing sense making process emphasises that study alone does not define who and what an overseas doctoral student is. In fact, a variety of factors, such as cultural and social capitals, are essential to explain how individuals are perceived by the selves and others and how such perceptions can implicate their identities.

The following is my own story that depicts my everyday experiences during the first five months of my overseas education journey. It is these experiences that inspired me to change my research focus from studying a group of undergraduate students in my home country to doctoral students of diverse backgrounds.

Life? What is that?[1]

Good to know now that I live in town because every day I get to walk by people and various shops. I know all the products and prices, I know when they are going to have a sale, I know this pair of shoes has been misplaced, I know that staff is not very friendly, I know this staff looks more friendly when you talk to him/her, I know the latest styles of coffee mugs that

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[1] It is my own story of the first five months into the doctoral programme. It was posted on my Facebook in 2010.

Starbucks have, I know which corner I can spend for entire afternoon without feeling guilty, I know which corners on the street stand couple strange people talking to themselves, I know which areas to avoid so that people would not shout at me as "chicken chao mien" and ask me to go back to Hong Kong... yet, I try to have a life here... but what a first year PhD student cannot ask is "a life"!

When you realize that you have tons of books and articles to read in order to make your solid comments, you don't have a life.

When you realize that this point leads you to other 100 points, you don't have a life.

When you realize that as a 4-year PhD student, the first year is spent on studying for your second Master degree in Education, you don't have a life.

When you realize that "Oh my god, I'm in Education? I thought I am in Translation and Interpreting", you don't have a life.

When you realize that somehow your proposal got you here because professors who are in Education and ethnography studies are interested in your research interests, but it's not directly related to translation and interpreting, and again, "Oh my god, I'm in Education?", you don't have a life.

When you realize that your second supervisor is leaving for another position in another school, you kind of have a life but it doesn't matter that much since he's your second supervisor, but now you start worrying about who your second supervisor gonna be and you kind of lost a good friend in hand ... then you start panicking again ... you don't have a life.

Life is a bitch, eh!

Still, it's your bitch! You have to live with it and you can't kill it. So the ritual on my way to the campus will continue because it's life. I will continue to bug the staff who is not so friendly when I need comfort and satisfaction. Or, I still have Happy Meal and the toys to make me happy. Most important of all, I have friends.

With friends, how bad can life be?

Ciao,

One should not be fooled or misled by the seemingly negative implications of the story because there are more layers and depth to be explored, including everyday life, ways of being, ways of positioning the self, and ways to negotiate meanings of life in a different context. I am currently an overseas doctoral student with background of being a lecturer to university students, an advisor to educational programmes offering multicultural contents, and an instructor to those aiming to study abroad. Being a student again, as well as interacting with lecturers, staff, fellow colleagues and other people here, brings many challenges to my sense of identity. My background sometimes acts like 'wings attached to a tiger'[2] in that it makes study and life overseas so much easier. However, it also feels as if a heavy rock is thrown on top of me when I fell into a well because I thought I knew it all. As a result, I have doubts about my competence as a student and individual. I am no longer a lecturer, an advisor and an instructor. I cannot expect that the interlocutors and I require less explicit communication and have more internalized understandings of what is being communicated (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). I notice that my ways of being, thinking and doing things are worked and negotiated depending on the situations I am engaged with. It is during this engagement that I encounter conflicting thoughts, negotiate, and come up with meanings that are new, but to a certain extent, have a hint of the old (Rutherford, 1990). Moreover, this process operates in an ongoing manner and in a cyclical fashion. I originally wanted to focus on identity evolution of a group of undergraduate students attending an intensive course of translation and interpretation between English and Chinese languages in order to pass the written test of the postgraduate studies in Taiwan. That would have required me to investigate a mono-cultural group learning test-oriented skills and knowledge base while developing in the home context. The first year of my own overseas doctoral journey gave me an opportunity to look at myself and my study from different perspectives. I encountered individuals who were far more interesting due to their diversity. I observed and listened to their unique stories and experiences, as a result, I changed my research from focusing on Taiwanese undergraduate students

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[2] Tiger merits strength and power. Attached with wings, a tiger becomes even stronger and more powerful. The phrase can indicate that a very competent person is facilitated with great strength or a positive situation is enhanced and advanced further by other advantageous qualities.

to understanding and exploring the holistic aspects of overseas doctoral students' experiences. Hence, this research was inspired locally from a personal motive (Gray, 2003).

I refocused my research to explore overseas doctoral students and to trace their changing processes in the light of studying and living in a cross-cultural context. I embarked on this research that could make good use of my own overseas doctoral student's experiences as a resource to engender research questions, design appropriate conduct, approach individuals with whom I had some common ground, and place myself in a naturally empathetic role where I could listen, interact, learn and understand.

1.2. The Research Question

My intention was to explore how identity is transformed over a lengthy period of time. As I have explained in the previous section, my target group consisted of overseas doctoral students. There has been research focusing on doctoral students' learning experiences and identities. My intention was to bridge the major gaps between one-off and process-oriented studies as well as between learning and living experiences.

Many different groups have engendered research interest focusing on identities; for instance, children, adolescents and adults (for instance, Erikson, 1968; Erikson, 1980) and immigrants (for instance, Berry, 2008), as well as students on short-term study abroad programmes (for instance, Adams, 2008; Arrúe, 2008). A few studies focus on doctoral students' experiences and identities (for instance, Hall & Burns, 2009; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010). My interest was in the area of overseas doctoral students' experiences and implications for their identities. In this sense, their personal in addition to their academic experiences provided further understanding of their identities. Moreover, I set out to trace how identity evolved under the different contexts. My intention

was to follow how they have changed, transformed and evolved. In so doing, contrary to many studies that were outcome-oriented (for instance, Yang, Noels & Saumure, 2006), this research focused on process. In addition, this study employed longer involvement and close engagement with the participants so as to recognize issues related to intrapersonal changes (Hoff, 2008; Chambers & Chambers, 2008). I had deep and interactive conversations with the target group, talked about their academic and personal life, and followed them for a year to record and even witness their changes in selves and perceptions in relation to others and the environment. My goal was that my process-oriented research on doctoral students' experience and identity would provide insights for higher education in the global village.

This research aimed to explore overseas doctoral students' everyday experiences that required them to react to the outside world, develop under different circumstances and construct new meanings for their identities. I would like to provide doctoral education, educators, researchers, policy makers and institutions, as well as doctoral students themselves of that existence with different perspectives of lives spent studying abroad and the implications for this specific group of students. To reach such a goal, I considered the narratives produced by these individuals most crucial as they offered in-depth information. Focusing on overseas doctoral students, I wondered, though, when language was not an issue and they were considered to be mature and skilful in life and research, how they had developed under different circumstances. How should the host institution help them? How were their perceptions changed due to living in the different context? How did identity transformation affect their personal and academic growth and development? To answer these questions it required overseas doctoral students, veterans and novices, to reflect on their learning and living experiences in order to draw a complete picture of the journey. The principal research question was therefore developed and formed:

What are the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution?

1.3. Theoretical Frameworks

Interactions between people, cultures and countries are frequent and spontaneous. The distance between countries seems much shorter than it did just twenty years ago. To explore doctoral students studying abroad and their identities, I have identified theoretical frameworks that consider identity matters, third space, and general doctoral students' learning and living experiences. The theoretical frameworks provided the context for the study and the aim.

1.3.1. Identity Evolution

Identity is a process that informs transitions of intrapersonal and interpersonal senses (Erikson, 1980). Woodward (2007) argues that individuals are connected to others and the larger societies they inhabit and that they belong to many groups. This suggests that individuals and the surrounding environment are linked. The identity of an individual then is constructed from the perspectives of the multiple positions they "take up" and "identify with" (Woodward, 1997, p. 39).

Opportunities to be in other countries as a result of professional relocation, education, and immigration are easier to take advantage of in this modern time. While the flow of people increases; changes in social and cultural processes are constant; boundaries of territories are blurred (Ke, 2008; Kim, 2008; Kim, 2012), and identities are no longer fixed but fluid (Burke & Stets, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). While living contexts change as individuals develop and grow, identities go through construction and reconstruction. Identities can be transformed and new identities can be created. Such a process is restless, linking individuals' personal intentions to external situations. As such, an agent-structure and internal-external dialectic emerge resulting in a manifested identity that is relational and discursive (Abdelal et al., 2009; Côté & Levine, 2002; Erikson, 1980), and is

viewed as a trajectory (Mcalpine, Amundsen, and Jazvac-Martek, 2010). Rather than abandoning original thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, an individual must create an alternative means to view identity, wherein fluid identity conceptions are emphasised. In the case of overseas doctoral students who study and live abroad, everyday life can give rise to frustration, as familiarities go missing (Bauman, 2009). Overseas doctoral education provides opportunities to establish new lifestyles, thoughts, and feelings to handle challenges and the need to subvert previously bound ways of being and doing things. Hence, hybrid views emerge from an ongoing process of ambivalence and emancipation to inform identity construction.

Identity then is composed of fluid conceptions. Moreover, identity emphasises an evolutionary process.

1.3.2. Third Space

Contexts are asserted to make a great contribution to individuals' identity construction processes (Soja, 1996). In a space where self and other, old and new, centre and peripheries, and now and then meet to clash and negotiate, hybrid identities are created within such a space where boundaries are transgressed, challenged, and liberated. This is a third space where thoughts, behaviours, and feelings encounter conflicts and liberation.

My argument of seeing identity as evolving is premised on third space and hybrid processes. Identity issues include crisis, management, and presentation wherein a sense of agency is required. The social agent role is enacted to deal with the changing structure, manifesting that an internal-external dialectic that is important in identity development. Identity evolution is also viewed from a third space perspective that explicates a space in which different positions are considered equally for enunciation. Allowing different positions to be negotiated equally would result in conflicts and liberations. In this sense, ambivalence and emancipation characterise third space. Conflicts and liberation lead to the creation

of hybrid ways of being, seeing and doing things that are distinctive to the individuals involved (Bhabha, 2004; Hall, 1990; Rutherford, 1990; Soja, 1996). Overseas doctoral students in the UK are "hybrids" living between time zones and spaces that extend beyond concepts of home, host context, and the bigger worlds (Lossau, 2009, p. 64). The notion of existing "beyond" (Soja, 2009, p. 59) contributes to a broadened awareness whereby space, spatiality, and attached values and norms are being negotiated, disputed, and transformed to create hybrid identities from a restless time and space wherein individuals, such as overseas doctoral students in the UK, dwell.

Overseas doctoral students are social agents who tend to evolve restlessly in the face of provisional life settings. Their identities are constructed and informed by various expectations. Doctoral education is then argued to be a context wherein doctoral students' identities evolve. Third space notions of hybrid identities help my study to view identity from an evolutionary point of view.

1.3.3. Doctoral Students' Learning and Living Experiences

Doctoral education provides a dynamic period of time and space for students to feel confident and successful, and at the other times, uncertain, incompetent, and frustrated (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Doctoral education is arguably a journey of emotional, intellectual, and personal evolution. My research focusing on everyday engagements led me to focus on overseas doctoral students' academic and non-academic encounters, as these learning and living experiences are equally critical to inform doctoral students' lives.

Doctoral students' learning experiences are concerned with milestones they must achieve in the Ph.D. process, supervisory issues, and disciplinary culture. Ampaw and Jaeger (2012) explore stages in the doctoral journey and point out important tasks in different Ph.D. stages. Doctoral students are required to recognise these tasks in order to transition, develop, and research successfully

(Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Tinto, 1993). In addition, supervisory issues are critical to doctoral students' development (Bell, 2010; Hall and Burns, 2009; Lyons and Scroggins, 1990; Polonsky and Waller, 2015). The supervisor plays several roles that are associated with supervisor's expertise, experiences, interpersonal relationship between the student and the supervisor, and the students' thesis progress (Ives and Rowley, 2005; Jazvac-Martek, Chen, and McAlpine, 2011; Li and Seale, 2007). Becher (1989), Becher (1994), Gardner (2010), Huber (1990), and Walsh (2010) point out that academic disciplines provide different structures of cognition and socialisation from which their members develop their identities. Understanding disciplinary distinctions helped my study to learn the students' perceptions of supervision and the research environment (Chiang, 2003), as well "epistemological considerations" (Becher, 1981, p. 111).

To view doctoral students more appropriately as whole persons, non-academic aspects of the doctoral journey are also important to explore when discussing overseas doctoral students' identity development. Socio-economic factors concerning the students' social networks and support systems, financial factors, and life changing events, describe doctoral students' living experiences. Social networks and support systems include friends and family, which help doctoral students to function and "persevere during difficult time" (Turner et al., 2012, p. 17). Financial factors can influence doctoral students' being and the development of the doctoral journey (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Doctoral students' identities as competent students and individuals fluctuate. Life changing events emphasise how such events can influence choices and priorities in doctoral students' lives, resulting in a major impact upon their identity evolution and have long-term influences to their lives.

Furthermore, I conducted this research from within, as I am also a member of the targeted research group of overseas doctoral students. I have experienced various encounters in my personal and academic life that have had an impact upon my sense of identity. My 'in-the-same-boat' position facilitates the design of this study in terms of gaining and maintaining access as well as enhancing insight into the participant's lived experiences based on natural empathy rather than "over-

identification" and mistaken resonance (Gray, 2003, p. 84).

Understanding general doctoral students' learning and living experiences helped to provide this study with a framework to learn about overseas doctoral students' lives contributing to their transformation over time and across space. When these overseas students demonstrate their role of a social agent on a daily basis while pursuing education and living under different circumstance, they encounter needs for acculturation and adjustment in knowledge, language, and social interaction. Their cultural and social capacities embedded in historical, geographical, and demographic concepts lead them to go through "attenuation/accentuation, threat and dislocating" (Hauge, 2007, p. 7), leading overseas doctoral students to experience "relocation" where their cultural background, oral and written forms of expression, ways to pursue knowledge, and connections with others encounter change (Turner et al., 2012, p. 17). Personal, academic, social, and cultural settings are crucial areas of focus in learning about overseas doctoral students' learning and living experiences and in the exploration of their identity evolution.

1.4. The Research Site

The target participants have been doctoral students of a UK university. Next to United States, the UK is the second most popular destination in the world for international students. There were more than 30,000 postgraduate research students registered in the UK during the 2011/2012 academic year, the year I collected data (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2015). The overseas student population has contributed to the internationalization of the university under study and the university town where the university is located by introducing diversity and global dynamics. According to the university website, the 2009/2010 academic year saw an amazing growth in international enrolments by 47%. It also reported that in early 2013 when I started writing up my thesis, the university environment reflected students from over 140 different countries and staff of over

50 nationalities. The university under study is ranked top 10 by several news media (for instance, The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2015). Given such a setting, this university is a multicultural space in which interactions between culturally different persons take place on a daily basis. Such experiences offer overseas doctoral students dynamic contexts to negotiate and construct new identities. The location for this research is an area famous for its mild climate. A major river runs through the town and creates many paths along the river and towards nearby towns and villages. The majority of the local people have an anglo/European ethnicity. Historically, it was also famous for its wool trade and is not far away from the port that has either welcomed or seen the departure of emigrants for centuries.

1.5. The Organization of This Thesis

This section introduces the structure deployed in this thesis. The chapters include literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Chapter two reviews the existing literature in relation to meanings of identity, doctoral students' learning and living experiences, and international students' learning and living experiences. Previous literature discussing overseas doctoral students experiences has concerned itself frequently with identity issues, including academic and social-cultural factors, while the experiences of doctoral students, in general, focus examination on the journey of study, often explored through the lens of distances as it related to language and culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Searle, 1991). To explore how studying abroad could influence overseas doctoral students' identities, definition of what identity means, third space notions of fluid and hybrid conceptions, and doctoral students' experiences of learning and living help provide insights.

In particular, Erikson's (1980) theory of identity formation and crisis in different stages in life provides a foundation to understand why identity matters.

Social and cultural identities are included to explicate levels and kinds of relationships between groups. I looked into the argument of seeing individuals as agents in verbal and non-verbal interactions so that meanings are constructed by virtue of these interaction experiences. This is to assert an agency-structure dialectic and recognize the capability people have and actions people take in the face of social relationships and the social world regardless of what the result would be (Côté & Levine, 2002; Haynes, 2008; McAlpine, 2012b). These sections reveal that the mundane and nuanced parts of everyday life provide the stage for individuals to have encounters to construct new meanings and that identity is tightly connected to individuals' lived experiences, which, in turn, are entailed with spatial, historical and geographical meanings.

The third space perspective is characterized by notions of ambivalence, emancipation and hybridity. I first provide meanings of third space perspective, which especially emphasizes the in-between state and its impact upon perceptions (Bhabha, 2004; Ikas, 2009; Rutherford, 1990). Third space encourages individuals to take time "to think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life" (Soja, 1996, p. 1). Drawing on the third space perspective and its notions of ambivalence, emancipation and hybridity, space and time constructs are taken into account to view identity as something that is evolving rather than being fixed.

Literature in relation to doctoral students' learning and living experiences explores these students' engagements that demonstrate change, factors leading to change, and impact such change has upon the formation of their identities. I explore milestones doctoral students must reach in different phases of the doctoral education journey, including supervisory issues, disciplinary differences, and socio-economic factors and consider how they delineate doctoral students' identity evolution. These studies point out that overseas doctoral students can be a distinct student group, as language and culture are found to have capacities to influence these students' ways of being, seeing, and doing things under different circumstances (Li and Seale, 2007). Their epistemological experiences, social integration, social-cultural adjustment, personal growth and development, and

issues in relation to supervision, are explored to learn how different expectations from differences in culture can have an impact on their doctoral journey. Literature in adjustment and acculturation of immigrants, short-term study abroad programmes and sojourners are incorporated in the literature review to see how relocation, length of time spent abroad and prior experience would influence individuals in terms of personal growth and development (for example, Côté & Levine, 2002; Hauge, 2007; Saviki & Selby, 2008; Turner *et al.*, 2012).

Chapter three provides in detail the methodology employed for conducting this research and achieving the research goal. To accomplish the research, I recognize that the participants' own backgrounds are present when they negotiate their subjective meanings. They interact with the context in which they "live and work" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). I sought to understand their experiences and processes arguing knowledge and reality. I did not focus on finding universal patterns among their narratives, nor did I intend to compare among them to make a list of similarities and differences. Such decisions indicate this research as employing constructivist paradigm and the epistemological stance of interpretivism (Crotty, 1998; Denzin, 2001; Flick, 2009; Silverman, 2006). Also, my intention to focus on process justifies the use of a longitudinal approach to follow and trace my set group of participants over a lengthy period of time during which continuous inquiries take place. Moreover, this study is designed to follow narrative enquiry principles by focusing on narratives to reveal trajectories of storylines, meanings concerning the events and the narrators, and interrelationships between everyday life and social contexts (Elliott, 2005). Narration and individuals' development are "a social process" where contextual elements intersect to influence identity and development (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2004, p. xii). Such a developmental feature of narration demonstrates sequences, meanings, and interrelations embedded in past, present, and prospective future, and helps me to explore identity from an evolutionary perspective.

My study involved my participants at all stages of the Ph.D. programmes and made sense of how they think and feel utilizing their own words and constant reflexivity (Atkinson, 2002; Spradley, 1979; Wolcott, 1990; Wolcott, 1999). I

recognised the participants as carriers of multiple cultures since they came from different backgrounds. This way, they brought global senses to the research site, which was considered mono-cultural. Through convenient, snowballing and voluntary recruiting methods, eight overseas doctoral students from seven countries were invited to share with me their perceptions retrospectively, introspectively and prospectively. We engaged with each other in in-depth interviews that were interactive and longitudinal to trace their changes. Each participant was interviewed individually four times over one-year span. In this setting, rapport and reflexivity were strongly emphasized to enhance this study and avoid bias as well as mistaken resonance.

Interview data were transcribed verbatim style and every participant's four interview transcripts were bound into one transcript booklet as primary source for data analysis. Data analysis and interpretation began during data collection. Data were approached utilizing a set of interview guide as signposts in data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse my interview data. There were two rounds of data analysis. The first one involved the focus on the individual participant. Meaningful units were first noticed and highlighted as being significant to the participants in the pre-coding step (Layder, 1998). These units were evidence and illustrations of my assertions. After that, it was open coding that required a close examination of data and was much closer to the text. This was to identify emergent codes, which were more descriptive. I then organised codes into categories based on a thorough exploration of similarities, commonalities, and peculiarities, as well as priorities and hierarchies of the codes to identify saliencies embedded in each participant's data. Such a process allowed me to view each participant as a whole person. A cameo of each participant was formed to contextualise each participant. Second round analysis focused on all the participants. In this round I examined the categories of all the participants to compare and contrast, which led to a synthesis of categories across the participants. This way, I was able to identify themes manifesting the meaning attached to the data (Lichtman, 2006). This led to the formation of findings. Rigour that conformed to ethical concerns was ensured by detailed description of the research design and data analysis approach (Flick, 2009; Liamputtong & Ezzy,

2005; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Silverman, 2005). Given the features involved in this research, it could be characterized as utilizing in-depth interview and a narrative enquiry (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010; Bell, 2010; Elliot, 2005; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Goodson, Biesta, Tedder, and Adair, 2010). Both the researcher and the participants underwent "experiencing, enquiring and examining" this research project (Wolcott, 1999. p. 51). Rigour of this qualitative research was justified by virtue of credibility, transferability, and reflexivity (Flick, 2009; Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005).

Chapter four presents findings organised following themes identified from our in-depth interviews that witness and record conflicting perceptions and trajectories of overseas doctoral students' change. As such, this research evolves with the participants. Analyses of how overseas education opportunity influences the participants uncovers significant themes including dynamics of the Ph.D. journey, supervisory issues, socio-economic factors and social identities, national and cultural identities developed overseas, socio-cultural adjustment, change over time and across space, and impact of being involved in this study on my participants. Dynamics of the Ph.D. journey depicted Ph.D. phases and milestones students must achieve, student-Ph.D. relationship, writing issues, additional requirements and work during the Ph.D. process, and students' identity presentation. Supervisory issues described supervisor's roles, student-supervisor relationship, supervisor change, and availability of supervision. The participants showed appreciation when supervisors acknowledge and express care about personal issues. Socio-economic factors presented issues of home, financial conditions, relationship, family, and marriage, as well as ambivalent social life and friendship. There were also different views concerning friendship and socialization. Salient issues included breaking boundaries of age and gender as well as being restricted by cultural codes and social norms embedded in home culture contexts. In terms of social identities, some participants felt a sense of isolation with their family, whereas for other participants, tight connections were maintained through regular trips to home countries. Spousal relationship were also influenced and ending with a divorce in a couple of cases. The participants showed different kinds of reactions in relation to cultural and national subjects. There were aspects of

culture that tend to be accepted and internalized for negotiation, whereas there were other aspects that were more difficult to change. In particular, the participants could be provoked easily if there were negative implication and connotation remarked by interlocutors despite intercultural interaction experiences. The participants needed a longer period of time to feel settled concerning the topic of where they came from. Analyses demonstrated that the participants' identities went through evolution and hybridization along time and across space and hybridization was characterized by both empowerment and disintegration.

Chapter five discusses meanings from the findings and answers the principal research question. I first provide a summary of the research purpose and methodology. Based on the findings, my participants' learning and living experiences and identity evolution show that they are, to some extent, ordinary doctoral students. They need to accomplish tasks in different Ph.D. phases. However, network, self-efficacy and relationship with the supervisor are not sufficient to explain academic success. Personal situations, cultural differences in writing, and research project types all contribute to different Ph.D. phases, functioning as milestones to achieve a more complicated matter. Despite encountering issues in their relationships with their supervisors, cultural differences were not critical elements influencing the relationships. They experienced identity shifts when there is a need for remaining advantageous. Although my participants are not more vulnerable beings, there are times that they demonstrate need for consideration of their overseas status. Overseas education gave rise to fluid perceptions regarding home and family relationships. Home became fluid and can be hybridised in that somewhere else can be considered home. Distance from home, financial situations, and demands of acculturation led my participants to feel insecure, isolated, and destabilised, markers of lives in the in-between space. They were changed by the experiences of overseas learning and living, which led to crisis. Academic, personal, and social lives, in which cultural elements are embedded in ways of being, seeing, and doing things, are intertwined and interrelated to impact hybrid identities and identity evolution.

Chapter six is a concluding section on issues in relation to identity evolution in the light of overseas doctoral education whereby participants are immersed and developed under different circumstances in a cross-cultural context. My study highlights that there are ramifications in academic identities; that there is no linear progression in academic identities; that being empowering is not always the case in hybrid identities; that it is not a matter of time in adjustment and acculturation; and that overseas doctoral education is part of a life journey. My study contributes to important insights about university support structure, supervisor's influence in development of identities and subjectivity outweighing objectivity. My study advocates for a holistic and unified supervisor's role and seeing students as 'whole persons' rather than 'the students" so that personal situations are not overlooked by supervisors and host institutions. Most important of all, my research points out that overseas doctoral students and their journeys are distinct. With limitations where my roles vacillate between a researcher, friend, and even therapist, constant reflection helps me to shift while still remaining critical. My study suggests an inclusion of members who are not included in this research or those with families. Also, the scope can be more encompassing when the research design can involve doctoral students for a longer period of time.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explored overseas doctoral students' learning and living experiences to find out how these experiences influenced these students' identities. The main argument lied in viewing identity as constantly being in a process of transition, and overseas doctoral students underwent distinct experiences that could have major impact upon their identities.

Previous literature discussing overseas doctoral students' experiences has concerned itself frequently identity issues, including academic and social-cultural factors, while the experiences of doctoral students, in general, focus examination on the journey of study, often explored through the lens of distances as it related to language and culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Searle, 1991). Indeed, investigation of doctoral students in general rarely engages in concurrent examination of both academic and daily living experiences. Such studies instead tend to consider those factors separately. Thus, to explore how studying abroad could influence overseas doctoral students' experiences, from the outset, a literature review of studies was necessary to define what identity meant from the perspective of the overseas doctoral student and to explore how notions of identity were socially constructed by this population in relation to the bigger world. Instead of fixed concepts of identity, third space notions of fluid and hybrid conceptions provided a framework for the construction of flexible and multiple identities in the lives of overseas doctoral students as appropriate. A thorough examination of identity, therefore, requires an exploration of overseas doctoral students' experiences of learning and living, in an effort to depict such students as whole persons, and to delineate how their lives, through their experiences, have impacted their identity evolution. To do so, I reviewed literature concerning doctoral students' experiences of learning and living, focusing on milestones associated with different phases undertaken by Ph.D. students, including supervisory issues, as well as socio-economic factors, and life changing events that were reported as essential elements to their identity evolution. These facets of experiences provided a context for me to focus this research on the identity evolution of the overseas doctoral student population.

Previous studies indicate that overseas status requires doctoral students to go through an even more diverse journey of novelty, ambivalence, and hybrid thoughts, behaviours, and feelings (Arrúe, 2008; Binder, 2008; Minucci, 2008; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Chambers and Chambers, 2008; Savicki, Adams, and Binder, 2008;). This chapter sought to verify that studying abroad indeed is a factor having great impact upon the identity evolution of overseas doctoral students.

2.1. Identity

For an individual, identity is a process that informs transitions of intrapersonal and interpersonal senses (Erikson, 1980). Identity is constructed in an individual's life through the growth and development of the self that is tightly connected to others and the bigger world in which an individual inhabit. Such a construction posits that the context of such growth and development has everything to do with a particular individual's ways of being, thinking, and doing. While living contexts continue to change as individuals grow, their identities go through construction and reconstruction. In other words, identities can be transformed and new identities can be created. Such a process is restless and goes on even after individuals' lives come to an end. This method of defining identity argues that identities are not fixed or singular but rather are fluid and multiple. This section discusses such a means of determining identity through an examination of agency and structure, two major characteristics of identity, and identity evolution. Below is a fuller discussion of meaning of identity followed by an analysis of agency and then structure.

2.1.1. Meaning of Identity

Jenkins (2008, p.5) contends that it is in human's nature that individuals always want to find out "who's who" and "what's what." To ask one's self the questions who and what I am, how I see myself, and how others see me are methods humans use to discover identity (Côté and Levine, 2002; Erikson, 1980; Gray, 2003; Haynes, 2008; Jenkins, 2008).

Erikson (1980, p. 109), from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, argues that "a conscious sense of individual identity," "an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character," "the silent doings of ego synthesis," and "a maintenance of an inner solidarity" inform concepts of identity. Apropos, identity maintenance—an individual's continuity and sameness—plays a crucial role to individuals' being and identity construction. A balance between self and the outside settings is desirable, and achieving such balance takes time and energy to reach balance, a prospect undertaken with no guarantee or promise of permanent or unchangeable outcome. This formation of an individual's identity helps to maintain the balance between self and outside and thus construct one's identity. As individuals grow, life experiences can present a multitude of challenges. As Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott (2009, p.2) argue, conditions in life keep identity "in flux until later consolidation". In this sense, identity creation is not only a non-stop process but also a life long pursuit and a never settled construction (Erikson, 1980; Jenkins, 2008; Woodward, 1997; Woodward, 2000).

Individuals are tightly connected to others and the larger societies "in which they live" (Woodward, 2000, p. 7). As individuals can belong to many groups, identity can be constructed from the perspectives of the multiple positions "we take up and identify with" (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). More specifically, identity links individuals and the surrounding society based on similarities and interests shared with groups of other people. On the other hand, this also means individuals can be identified and grouped based on differences. Namely, identity can be explained on the basis of "what they are not" (Woodward, 1997, p. 35). Hecht, Warren, Jung, and Krieger (2005) agree that by maintaining a difference from others, identity is informed. In this case, identity construction requires individuals to strive to examine similarities and differences, both silently and explicitly,

between themselves, others, and groups, in order to feel recognised, accepted, and that he or she belongs. Identity thus is built upon a basis of "content and contestation" (Abdelal et al., 2009, p. 9). This is how salient individuals attempt to express their identification with the group "openly and explicitly" in interactions with others (Imahori and Cupach, 2005, p. 197) because it is through these given interactions that individuals demonstrate their identification with the group and the strength of their agreement with the entailed norms and code of the group culture.

Given that identity can be explained from three dimensions: "individual", "interpersonal" and "community" (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 161). Such three dimensions comprise an individual's subjective sameness and continuity over time, what one means to others, experiences one engages with from interactions and one's positions in within bigger contexts (Abdelal et al., 2009; Côté and Levine, 2002; Erikson, 1980). Individual dimensions of identity involve "internal psychological concepts of the self" and the "centrality of subjective meaning" (Haynes, 2008, p. 622); interpersonal dimensions of identity connotes "relationships between individuals" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 39). Further, community dimensions of identity referred to the multiple positions taken up in the social structure by individuals.

An individual can have many different identities. This is to underscore that individuals are not properly described as whole persons if the fact that such individuals have multiple as well as fluid identities is overlooked. Of course, an individual is more likely to be viewed from various "aspects" in life where "each aspect" is connected in different ways and degrees to "the other aspects" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 7). Each 'aspect' of an individual is a role of that particular individual. Considered this way, 'role' is not interchangeable with 'identity'. Consequently, different aspects of an individual are 'roles' of that individual in different aspects in life, whereas 'identity' is about the whole person (ibid.). As identity is not akin to the state of a person at any one time, identity becomes fluid and multiple. In this sense, an individual has many different identities, which are negotiated and constructed in different settings simultaneously.

This framing of identity addresses identity as relational and discursive (Abdelal et al., 2009; Côté and Levine, 2002; Erikson, 1980), being multiple and fluid (Burke & Stets, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009,), and considers the salience of identification (Abdelal et al., 2009; Imahori and Cupach, 2005). It is a process and is always in transition. The next section describes aspects of identity that demonstrate an individual's relation to the larger society.

2.1.2. Agency and Structure

"Identity is never unilateral", Jenkins asserts (2008, p. 42). Experiences as a result of daily interactions provide improvisational and situational expectations for individuals to experience and react to. This indicates that identity is relational (Erikson, 1980; Jenkins, 2008). Such a relation points to the reality that an individual is embedded in the context exists for a particular individual. And, this individual has the power to construct identities in multiple ways. In reviewing identity literature, agency and structure are recognised as major features informing identity.

2.1.2.1. Agency

Individuals encounter different situations which provide them with a means to digest the meanings and consequences of such situations and learn lessons to better manage future actions. Therefore, the formation of identity is also a process whereby individuals utilise their knowledge and behaviours to act and react, as well as construct and reconstruct ways of being and doing things. An individual engaging in this process can be defined as an "agent" or an "entity that acts" (Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 6). The process of existing as a social agent who can intentionally change current situations to preferred directions illustrates an additional method of how identity is socially constructed.

Understanding the existence of human intention and choice underscores that individuals have the capacity to enact "agentic or intentional behaviours" (Côté and Levine, 2002, p. 9). It is human agency that empowers individuals to respond to situations and to demonstrate their intentions. In Haynes's (2008, p. 623) view, human agency means that people are social agents who aim to have control over the "social relationships in which they are embedded." This is a reference to Woodward's (2000) assertion that individuals are responsible for shaping their own identities. McAlpine and Amundsen (2009, p.109) further contend in the case of the doctoral educational journey, that students enact their roles as agents to "shape and not just be shaped by the contexts" in which they inhabit. Individuals such as doctoral students strive to develop and thrive in the environment where their beings are situated. Systems and patterns accumulated to cultivate these individuals such that they are able to perform intentional actions.

Consider a doctoral student in the UK, for example. It does not matter whether she is experiencing a more settled or unsettled periods in her life cycle. Instead, she may experience various interactional social processes in a number of situations and resulting in her gaining a new interpretation of how to feel and what to think about a particular social practice. Further such experiences will no doubt inform her decision as to how she should behave henceforth when experiencing a similar social practice.

Doctoral students set their research purposes, research methodologies and methods, and are given the responsibilities to select a suitable supervisor. They certainly practice their agentic power as doctoral students when they endeavour to design the direction of their studies to a desired outcome. In this setting, McAlpine (2012b) emphasises further that the foremost essence of agency is on a doctoral student's intention and exertions to try, even though they may encounter difficult experiences or even failures. The value of agency then, does not lie in the outcome, but in the action that demonstrates attempt and effort. It is imprudent to stress the difficulties one encounters in exhibiting human agency and to ignore the benefits to be gained through the exercise of human agency in the identity construction process. Viewed in this way, negative encounters are not

undervalued and overlooked. Instead, they are operated as lived experiences exerting variable levels of influence upon identity creation. External conditions can change without giving any prior notice; however, it is the individual who must decide what measures to take in response to such changes. This is to argue that individuals actively and intentionally assume the necessary roles and exert the necessary effort to construct and reconstruct identities. They do not simply accept or adhere to roles and positions from previous generations of identity but choose to face the realities that are in flux and even welcome changes in the systems with which they interact to pursue different identities that can only be achieved and assumed through investment of significant time and energy. It is an activity practiced between the individual and the collective in a restless and relentless manner.

Humans have agentic capacity in reaction to the changing structures, manifesting an internal-external dialectic process as life moves forward (Erikson, 1980; Jenkins, 2008; Woodward, 1997; Woodward, 2000). This internal-external dialectic that the external structure has impacts the extent to which individuals experience transitions that lead to a transformation of their identities. Process and the intention to change in response to external structures verify humans' agentic power in the construction of identity.

2.1.2.2. Structure

Structure means "the social relationships themselves and the conditions under which people act" (Haynes, 2008, p. 623). Contexts such as social, cultural and disciplinary entities and communities exemplify 'structure' that contextualises individuals and their identities.

Identity demonstrates the linkage between personal and social worlds pertaining to our perceptions of who and what we are, the societies we live in, the factors that can affect lived experiences, and the extent to which people take up

new identities and gain access to influence others (Woodward, 2000). Hall (1990, p. 222) strongly underscores that as one asserts his or her positions and identities in the larger society, he or she is concurrently enunciating a solid ground illuminating "a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific". Structure, in this sense, is associated with social and cultural qualities, and, therefore, informs identity.

The communal dimension of identity, as argued by Spencer-Oatey and Frenklin (2009), involves numerous groups that are demonstrated by virtue of gender, social class, age, and profession, to name a few (Ting-Toomy, 2005a). This definition also provides an argument for multiple identities and and tensions found between "content and contestation" within social groups that provide the sense of belonging (Abdelal et al., 2009, p. 9). Tajfel (1982, p. 2) argues that individuals' "knowledge", "their membership of a social group (or groups)", as well as the "value and emotional significance" attached to the group describe their social identities. It is possible that a discrepancy can take place between the extent to which individuals identify with the group membership and the attached values and emotions thereof. In this sense, disagreement occurring between the social identity and the attached significance can give rise to conflicting thoughts and feelings, which threatens how individuals see and feel about themselves. In turn, their identities are destabilised. Thus, continuity of personal character is disturbed and the "ego synthesis" becomes a noisy and even uneasy process (Erikson, 1980, p. 199).

Community dimension of identity also addresses cultural contexts that individuals learn from and gain practice with on a daily basis. Such a cultural sense presents "a learned system of meanings that fosters a particular sense of shared identity and community among its group members" (Ting-Toomy, 2005b, p. 71-72). In this sense, a culture may be described as a collection of patterns in which its inhabitants are informed and embodied. To explore further, these patterns can be explained in terms of "traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community" (ibid.). Being embedded in one's cultures, it is highly possible that an

individual is not aware of the identity shaping features to which he follows and adheres (Ting-Toomy, 2005a). In other words, they naturally and unconsciously think, act, and feel in certain ways. It is so natural that it is likely that they do not sense otherwise until challenged. This suggests that contact with other ways of being and doing things can trigger tensions, conflicts, and struggles. The implication is that some cultural elements eventually are to be transformed.

In Hall's (1990, p. 225) view, cultural identity is influenced by "history, culture and power". Through this lens, culture can explain in what ways individuals arrive at the current position. As culture is deeply rooted in its members' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, it is a durable essence to its members. Collier (2005, p. 240) asserts that "cultural identities both endure over time and space, and change in significant ways," implying that cultural identities may take longer time and more energy to be shaken. The degree to which cultural qualities can be transformed is explored in Jackson's (2002a, p. 361) "cultural contracts" which argues that attributes of culture are not always fixed. It is arguable that some are more rigid whereas others are flexibile. In particular, "ready-to-sign" contracts are not to be negotiated, "quasi-completed contracts" are open for negotiation, and "co-created contracts are completely negotiable" (Hecht et al., p. 267-268). In such settings, different levels of "cultural contracts" emerge to offer protection, definition, and stipulation in everyday interactions which suggest that cultural identities can be processed and transformed. One's "world view or portions of it" hence evolve actively and coercively (Jackson, 2002a, p. 361).

Both Tajfel (1982) and Hall (1990) highlight the interconnected relationships between individuals and cultural codes and social norms, which to some extent constrain and, at the same time, liberate our understanding of how identities are constructed (Friedman & Antal, 2005; Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis, 2008). Power and gender issues exemplify how social norms and cultural codes can be destabilised in the case of overseas doctoral students, the research target of this study. The doctoral student at home and the same doctoral student in another country, where work, study, and living continue to take place, are connected (Fritz et al., 2008).

The close relationship of the agency and structure illuminates the agentic power of individuals and the complexity of external structures. Individuals are connected to the surrounding society in which they inhabit. As contact with individuals from diverse backgrounds increases, individuals are provided with more opportunities to encounter very different contexts from which to form various degrees of transformed ways of being and seeing things. Identity is no longer a fixed concept, but better viewed as a process that undergoes constant change with fluid notions. Identity, hence, can be viewed as an evolutionary process.

2.1.3. Identity Evolution

Identity is argued to connect an individual to "the unique values, fostered by a unique history, of his people" and "it also relates to the cornerstone of this individual's unique development" (Erikson, 1980, p. 109). It describes how one arrives at where one is at now and what one is likely to become in the future and is informed by the context experienced by the individual. An exploration of lived experiences appears to help provide historical and biographical information about an individual. This suggests that identity can be viewed as a trajectory (McAlpine, 2012a; McAlpine, 2012b; Turner et al., 2012). Moreover, this has raised the need to explore the evolutionary journey of identity froth the hybrid identity conceptions and the third space perspective (Bhabha, 1990; Soja, 1996).

2.1.3.1. Viewing Identity as A Trajectory

An individual's lived experiences involve historical, geographical, and biographical information that contextualises this individual's trajectory. Trajectory, hence, is a concept that can help to understand identity, insofar as the individual's backgrounds, relations with others, and environment they live in, as time goes by, provides a more complete picture about identity. As such, intention, relations, and

time, are key elements to consider when exploring identity. Focusing on the identity development of doctoral students, new academics and pre-tenure academics, McAlpine, Amundsen, and Jazvac-Martek (2010, p. 139) argue that identity is viewed as a trajectory:

> Identity-trajectory emphasises the desire to enact personal intentions and hopes over time; to maintain a momentum in constructing identity despite challenges and detours; and to imagine possible futures.

Agency, support systems, lived experiences, and a past-present-future timeline concept are defining features of the identity-trajectory.

Support systems are an important feature in identity-trajectory. Individuals are related to different groups, giving rise to their multiple identities in different settings simultaneously. Such support systems can be located in school, work, family, and social groups. In the case of doctoral students, support systems range from an academic community that includes supervisors, lecturers, and fellow colleagues, to non-academic communities that consist of family and friends. Support systems, in this sense, are derived from academic, personal, and social aspects, and account for doctoral students' experiences of learning and living. This way, academic study is not the only component of doctoral students' lives (McAlpine, 2012b). Doctoral students may find it important for them to find a balance between study and time spent not studying. Aspects of a student's non-academic part of life may provide the necessary levelling effect to the study-life balance. However, relations with family also exemplify the need to attend to various elements of everyday life, which is a long-term commitment. As such, difficulties in balancing study and non-academic relationships are likely to give rise to tensions for these students. This is a typical work-personal divide that challenges some doctoral students' development as students and as whole persons. Such a work-personal divide resonates with McAlpine's (2012b, p. 179) "life-family-work" notion that states that the personal aspects of identity-trajectory can destabilise—enhance and, simultaneously, hinder—doctoral students' progressions in study and life as students and persons.

In addition, situating study within a broader personal life spectrum characterises identity-trajectory. Individuals make sense of daily life through experiences in "material, social and symbolic practices" (Gray, 2003, p. 1), suggesting identities are to be sought from wider and deeper dimensions that merit a historical viewpoint to involve personal context and experiences in the past and present to imagine the future (Gee, 2000-2001). Lived experience stems from everyday life and gives rise to a democratised sense of culture, highlighting the ordinary and the mundane parts of accumulated life encounters that help to construct identity. Turner, McAlpine, and Hopwood (2012), and Hopwood et al. (2011) reveal that doctoral students also conduct a myriad of "non-academic activities", such as "socialising, caring for others (children, spouses, parents, relatives), spending time with family, sports and fitness pursuits, domestic work (household chores) and leisure activities" that permeate doctoral students' lives (Hopwood et al., 2011, p. 220). As such, doctoral students have different aspects of life for them to take part in and attend to. Besides being students, other tasks are equally important to them. Experiences of learning and living therefore are suggestive of situating doctoral students' academic identities within a bigger personal life spectrum (McAlpine, 2012b).

Furthermore, a past-present-future timeline concept provides a dynamic way to view identity in the identity-trajectory paradigm (McAlpine & Turner, 2012). Knowledge and experience accumulated so far can suggest plans for the prospective future. In this sense, identity-trajectory encompasses the collection of significant events that have taken place in other times and spaces. Viewing identity as a trajectory allows this study to explore doctoral students' particular individual and past experiences. As such, I am able to study how these experiences affect overseas doctoral students' "present intentions" and "future imagined possibilities" (ibid., p. 536). Including prior experiences helps to explain how the doctoral student arrives at current positions. Viewing identity as a trajectory, hence, merits an approach to integrate past happenings, present contingencies and a future that may be in a state of flux.

Doctoral students' "personal values, needs and responsibilities" have major impact upon the ways and extents to which they engage in the aspects of their lives that go beyond study and where they are more appropriately viewed as whole persons (McAlpine et al., 2010, p. 135). Senses of human agency, support systems, situating academic identities within a broader personal life spectrum, and the past-present-future dynamic resonate with Hall's (1990) views of history, authenticity, and culture that inform identities, highlighting the fluid sense of identity that evolves over time and across space.

2.1.3.2. Fluid Identity Conceptions

The relational nature of identity merits multiple identities individuals hold at one time and in their lifetime (Burke and Stets, 2009; Friedman and Antal, 2005). Individuals can hold multiple identities based on the relations that exist within groups and the institutions an individual recognizes and is recognized by. In this sense, identity can be inherited, acquired, and authorised. Identity can also be taken away. Again, identity is no longer fixed but fluid.

Fixed identity is referred to as the identity that individuals are born into and does not change in a conventional sense. For instance, being born as a girl or as the third child of a family in Japan, describes an individual's identity in a natural perspective, namely, being a female, a daughter, a sibling and a Japanese person (Gee, 2000-2001). Fluid identity, in the same example, can mean that this individual establishes an international business and becomes an entrepreneur that makes her recognisable on a global scale, and yet she may insist on spending her evenings cooking for her children and the husband. Individuals inherit, assume, and pursue many different identities such as being a daughter, a university professor, and a foreigner who has Asian characteristics but/and speaks English with an American accent. This fluid sense of identity can be identified in the light of similarities and differences to other groups, as well as affinity, authorisation, and discussions (Gee, 2000-2001).

With regard to overseas doctoral students in the UK, the colonial identity theories can provide some theoretical frameworks. Fanon's work (1952) focuses on combating the oppression of black people, and explains how black people feel dependent and inadequate living in a white world. In this setting, black people can be described as experiencing a sense of loss of their culture of origin, and, at the same time, as having to accept the dominant. Moreover, mobility between classes is often confined to those with privileges who receive an education abroad and master the language of the coloniser. This is a demonstration of a fixed concept of identity, in which identities are static due to hierarchies of power that restrain options for the colonised. As a result, a sense of inferiority emerges in the being and identities of black people. Receiving education and gaining a mastery of language are considered ways to mimic the white dominant culture. The colonised black utilises skills of the dominant in order to function. This is to suggest that a white mask is being imposed upon the black skin. Hence the conflicting feelings of dependence and inadequacy emerge. This can also be explored using a less tensed discussion in relation to essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives of identity. Essentialist notions tend to suggest a fixed, authentic, and unchanged concept of identity, as essentialist claims are based upon "nature", "history", and "the past," moulds for members to shape identity (Woodward, 1997, p. 12). Nevertheless, identities can also be authorised, discussed, and assumed, suggesting identities are no longer being constrained by social class and inherited boundaries. Moreover, fixed identity conceptions do not seem to suit this world where contacts between distant people increase, giving rise to transformations of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Fluid conceptions of identity are thus being utilised to frame identity matters in this study.

In addition, fluid conceptions of identity describe overseas doctoral students in the UK more appropriately. Hall (1990) asserts that as culture continues to evolve, identity formation is an ongoing process that is constantly in production. Rather than being a final product, identities are in a transitional journey. In this sense, fluid conceptions of identity allow for multiple and flexible identities. Non-essentialist ideas resonate this fluid sense of identity, arguing that both different

and shared attributions are to be taken into consideration, that identity can be static, fixed, and fluid, changing, and dynamic (Côté & Levine, 2002; Jenkins, 2008; Rindal, 2010; Woodward, 1997; Woodward, 2000). Non-essentialist arguments speak from a more socio-cultural standpoint to celebrate not being "fixed, immutable or primordial," thereby acknowledging that identity changes according to the changing continuity (Jenkins, 2008, p. 19). This way, senses of provision, transience, and fluidity characterise identity. This is the condition where "relocations" (Turner, McAlpine, and Hopwood, 2012, p. 17) take place in "life-family-work" (McAlpine, 2012a, p. 179) on a daily basis in the case of doctoral students. 'Relocations' suggest a sense of moving from a point of origin to an ever-changing destination. Places, concepts, knowledge, and feelings attached to certain items can experience 'relocations', which do not necessarily lead to positive outcomes of integration. Isolation and marginalization are also possible choices. Doctoral students are immersed in a world full of contingencies and yet identities are developed from such fluid situations.

In the light of Heidegger's concept of Zuhandenheit, things that one notices are those that are not at presence, Bauman (2009, p. 2) remarks that things become "frustrating" and come "into our vision, attention and thought" when they go missing. Moving to a new location can mean a new kind of lifestyle being built upon various cultures and people inhabiting that environment. A move may represent a new opportunity to think, behave, and feel differently. At the same time, this new context gives rise to challenges of prior knowledge, voluntarily and/or coercively. It is a great opportunity for individuals to subvert previously bound ways of being and doing things. It is where hybrid views emerge from a journey of ambivalence and emancipation and characterise processes of identity construction. Not only is identity composed of fluid conceptions but it also emphasises hybridity.

2.1.3.3. Hybrid Identity Conceptions

Both postcolonial and spatial perspectives utilise hybrid identity conceptions to describe an in-between situation where concepts meet to create an organic and new ways of being and of doing things. In particular, hybrid identity conceptions focus on negotiations taking place between self and other, old and new, centre and peripheries, and now and then, as well as boundaries that are transgressed, challenged, and liberated.

Soja (1996, p. 1) asserts that "place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography" contribute to identity construction processes for individuals. Such an assertion is in accordance with the dynamic and historical senses of identity (Hall, 1990; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine & Turner, 2012), making it explicitly important that individuals and their lived experiences are tightly connected, as identity construction processes fluctuate.

In addition to fluidity, hybrid conceptions of identity are drawn to underpin identity evolution. As hierarchies of power encapsulate very fixed concepts of identity, inadequacy, inferiority, and dependency are found in individuals who are bound in the colonised senses (Fanon, 1952). To liberate from such a setting, the abandonment of original thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is not an appropriate resolution for the individual. Instead, the individual must create an alternative means of viewing identity, wherein hybrid identity conceptions are strongly emphasised (Lossau, 2009). Individuals are urged to find "new ways" to develop "the scope and critical sensibility" so that original ways of being and thinking are questioned and challenged (Soja, 1996, p1). Moreover, individuals are encouraged to acknowledge different and incommensurable qualities. In so doing, identity construction and reconstruction is grounded upon foundations that are always in a state of flux. Furthermore, individuals should aspire to destabilise binaries and overcome fixations of original territories (Lossau, 2009). Hybridity, in this sense, problematises notions of both/and, either/or, and neither/nor. Hybrid identity conceptions transcend both/and, either/or, and neither/nor.

Bhabha (1990, p. 211) articulates the notion of hybridity:

all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge.

Third space can be illustrated utilising concepts such as space, "place" and "borderlands" to describe intersections where individuals and their identities and repertoire interact with an intention to move their lives forward (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p. 162-163). 'Place' offers a sense of fixity and familiarity whereas 'space' tends to promote continuing exploration, suggesting that it is possible for individuals to emancipate from their places (Fougère, 2008). In this sense, emancipation brings excitement due to the anticipation of upcoming new experiences. On the other hand, emancipation can also bring worries, given that the future is unknown. In addition, a state of confusion may affect individuals' sense of belonging when they are situated at the 'borderlands (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p. 163)." According to Anzaldúa (1987, unpaged preface), borderlands:

are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, wherever people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.

Hybrid identity conceptions derive from this third space setting, in which individuals encounter doubts in their thoughts, behaviours and feelings that mark a moment of ambivalence. Ambivalence is the result of having conflicts and ambiguities with regard to prior and newly learned ways of seeing and doing things. Being able to contemplate original and new positions suggests ability to form critical views and illustrates a propensity for self-realisation. The ability to contemplate original and new positions also functions as a window for emancipation from previously formed thoughts and feelings. Engaging in a cyclical journey within this third space setting gives rise to hybrid identity conceptions

wherein organic ways of seeing and doing things are developed and created. Hybrid identities are informed by positions—original and new, familiar and strange, friendly and hostile, central and peripheral—that are discussed, disputed, confessed, apologised, and negotiated (Bhabha, 2009).

Applying third space perspective to identity conceptions highlights the need for individuals to hold onto held thoughts before prejudice and biased judgements are made (Bhabha, 2004). Third space facilitates a moment wherein individuals' role of social agents are engaged in an effort to mediate different or conflicting opinions to reach approximation, and to diagnose of past, current and unknown conditions ahead. The inclination to hold back does not necessary indicate an intent to hesitate or avoid issues ahead. Rather, third space enables a "draw back and leap forward motion" where hybrid identity conceptions are informed (Pitts, 2009, p. 451). As individuals function as agents whose identities are socially constructed, the agent role empowers individuals to "leap forward with new insight" (ibid.). Nevertheless, hybrid identity conceptions seem to imply that the most salient example to describe a hybrid identity is positive in nature. It is not difficult to refute such an assertion, however, as some studies already point out that, for instance, being cosmopolitan is just one of many possible descriptions of hybrid identities. Among them, Anthias (2001, p. 628) argues that individuals can undergo "a ghettoisation and enclavisation process" that keeps them dwelling "in a 'time warp', a mythologizing of tradition" and upholding "nationalistic fervour or identification." This is "the reductionist power of cultural and political fixations" that Lossau (2009, p. 64) asserts individuals aim to overcome the third space discourse. Apparently, Anthias (2001) and Lossau (2009) seek to remind readers, that in addition to development, protection is also a characteristic of hybrid identities. Such protective practises may suggest the rise of alienation and isolation and also enable the possibility of unanticipated outcomes as a result of contacting with otherness. Berry's (2009, p. 366-367) research on acculturation and acculturation strategies, which focus on individuals, "specific ethnocultural groups" developing in a different context, i.e., "the dominant group," points out, partially, similar notions concerning negative forms of hybrid identity conceptions. Berry's (2009) acculturation strategies and Anthias' (2001) reminder are of great

significance as they emphasise that undergoing ambivalence and emancipation does not necessarily lead individuals to a positive personhood in the form of being considered cosmopolitan or being able to, or wanting to, mediate between different positions such as those embedded in cultures.

Hybridity is one step ahead of fluidity in identity conceptions. Hybrid identity conceptions address situations in which varying positions are discussed and different forms of hybridity are explored. In the case of overseas doctoral students in the UK, they are "hybrids" living between time zones and spaces that extend beyond concepts of home, host context, and the bigger worlds (Lossau, 2009, p. 64). The notion of existing "beyond" (Soja, 2009, p. 59) contributes to a broadened awareness whereby space, spatiality, and attached values and norms are being negotiated, disputed, and transformed in order for hybrid and organic identities to be created from a restless time and space wherein individuals, such as overseas doctoral students in the UK, dwell.

Identity is relational. Individuals' identities are tightly connected to contexts that provide encounters for them to live, articulate, and negotiate subjective meanings towards self, others, and the bigger worlds. Contexts provide access to understand spatial, historical, and geographical qualities attached to individuals. In the case of doctoral students, they have a tendency to evolve restlessly in the face of provisional life settings in order to find meanings that help them to make sense of their everyday experiences of learning and living. Their roles as social agent are practiced daily. Consequently, their identities are constructed and informed by different expectations. Doctoral education can be argued as a context wherein doctoral students' identities evolve.

In what follows, attention will be given to doctoral students' lived experiences of living and learning, which contextualise the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution.

2.2. Doctoral Students' Learning and Living Experiences

Doctoral education provides a dynamic period of time and space for students to encounter various kinds of experiences. Doctoral students can feel confident and successful, and at other times uncertain, incompetent, and frustrated (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Identity issues, in the previous section, were discussed in terms of agentic, structural, and evolutionary conceptions. In the case of doctoral students, their identities continue to develop as they navigate their education journey. As such a doctoral education is also a journey of emotional, intellectual, and personal evolution. My aim to explore overseas doctoral students' identity evolution required a review of literature focusing on everyday engagements that the general doctoral student population has changed and on factors that have demonstrated impacts such change has had upon the formation of their identities. My decision to explore this aspect of overseas doctoral students' identity evolution was a response to the argument that both academic and non-academic encounters are equally critical in an effort to inform doctoral students' lives. In this section, I explored doctoral students' learning and living experiences in terms of milestones reached in different phases of the doctoral education journey, including supervisory issues, disciplinary differences, and socio-economic factors, to consider how they delineated doctoral students' identity evolution.

2.2.1. Milestones Reached in the Ph.D. Process

A review of the pertinent literature identified goals and activities doctoral students intended to achieve and conduct at different phases in the Ph.D. process (Ampaw and Jaeger, 2012; Callary et al., 2012; McAlpine et al., 2009; Tinto, 1993). The tasks and phases identified indicated that there are identifiable and common milestones that mark the typical stages of the doctoral education making it a journey of transition.

Learning new skills that relate to teaching and learning approaches, becoming familiar with disciplinary cultures, and, occasionally, learning to use a second language, and modifying or learning various communication styles exemplify requirements new doctoral students need to learn about at the doctoral level (Evans and Stevenson, 2011; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine et al., 2009; Walsh, 2010). Therefore, milestones that mark the early phase of Ph.D. process include being aware of and familiar with the demands of the programme and making an effort to meet the demands. The students need to explore and understand both explicit and implicit expectations embedded in conducting research and within the research community. Doctoral students grow from their previous levels to meet the requirements at the doctoral level, which suggests that "transition" is taking place (Ampaw and Jaeger, 2012, p. 642). Moreover, being more assertive in writing and communication (Walsh, 2010), as well as establishment of networks, also exemplify are demands to meet. The meanings of such transitions demonstrate that the students are in an in-between state where these students' past experiences were challenged, questioned, and even changed, in order to make sense of the presenting demands. Also, transition illuminates the students' intention to respond. The agent role, hence, becomes explicit. They are responsible for creating ways to pursue academic success and establishing networks to inform their doctoral trajectories. Transitions are an ongoing practice wherein doctoral students' prior mindsets, skills, and knowledge are utilised to decide the extent of transformation necessary to accomplish new standards, or at least to find a balance between the old and the new for the sense of continuity. This way, transition emerges as a rite of passage that characterises ambivalent, provides opportunity for emancipation and results in hybridisation.

Doctoral students experience ambivalent thoughts and feelings. Further study and exploration enable these students to express critical views and argue for their stances. This is the phase of transition during which doctoral students' arguments are being developed (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). The milestones achieved, hence, include elaboration and justification of the research purpose, theoretical framework, methodology employed, and networks being maintained in order for the Ph.D. to grow (McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine et al., 2009). Networks

support doctoral students' autonomy and self-efficacy, which can arguably bring about a positive doctoral experience (Lyons and Scroggins, 1990; Paglis, Green and Bauer, 2006; Pearson and Brew, 2002). Additional milestones doctoral students must achieve include the conduct and completion of data collection, both of which are an indication that doctoral students' arguments have been developed and explored utilising a set of justified methods and research targets. As such, time management, good relationships with supervisors and other academic figures and the researched targets, and assertive writing are additional milestones that must be achieved. These are not easy or simple tasks and the need to accomplish them demonstrates that doctoral students should have a strong sense of autonomy in order to endure solitary work, be able to work effectively and efficiently to accomplish their research goals and build and nurture strong networks to be of assistance if needed at some point during their doctoral journeys. As such, it is not difficult to understand how such a journey can influence their identities.

During the final phase of a Ph.D. programme, doctoral students spend most of their time writing up their thesis wherein they report and elaborate on the meanings of their research findings. The goal of such an endeavour is to make a meaningful contribution of research to the respective field. The milestones in this final phase include the submission of the thesis and a successful performance during the student's oral defence or Viva, arguably the most important interview of the students' lifetime. Successful completion of these milestones will allow doctoral students to obtain their doctorate degrees and complete their doctoral education journey (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). It is also during this final phase that doctoral students' academic networks are utilised to assist with finding examiners, locate relevant studies, recent readings and publications. Doctoral students must also gain their supervisor's approvals by meeting the programme's requirements concerning the proper presentation of their argument, analysis, and interpretations of the research (Halls and Burns, 2009; Lyons & Scroggins, 1990; Paglis et al., 2006). This is harvest time during which communication with their supervisors and members of the doctoral students' networks will help to move the research towards desired and positive outcomes (Polonsky and Waller, 2015).

Moreover, doctoral students are expected to complete their degrees in a timely manner and are required to recognise and "meet new demands for developing a broader skill set for future employment" (Pearson & Brew, 2002, p. 136).

Doctoral students' lives do not stop once they are awarded the doctorate. As identity theories suggest, these individuals continue their lives and identity evolution as they contemplate and arrange the next steps in their lives. This process of planning for the future is endowed with new, particular milestones the students' must achieve, such as deciding whether to pursue a profession in industry or academia. To be sure, advice and suggestions given by members of the networks established by doctoral students, together with the doctoral students' personal knowledge, skill, and mindsets acquired during the doctoral education journey provide guidance on the pathway to students' future careers and post-doctorate lives. Thus prevailing market situations, desired salary levels, and achievement of professional goals function as new milestones for doctoral students to recognise, set, and achieve. Indeed, the agent role continues to interact with the bigger worlds to construct and reconstruct identity in a restless fashion.

The various milestones that must be achieved during the different phases in the Ph.D. process point out that doctoral education is permeated with concepts of transition that require doctoral students to constantly challenge their beliefs. In so doing, they move between peripheries and centres that mark their in-between state. As such, their identities are always in transition. Moreover, even when the doctoral degree is acquired, life goes on, producing new and additional milestones during the last stage of doctoral education journey and the phase that follows which will involve the planning of a career path for the future. Regardless of which stage doctoral students are within, their milestones are set and reset based on new requirements and demands. Such a cyclical fashion again reinforces hybrid conceptions of identities where identities evolve restlessly between the ever changing now and then, here and there, centre and periphery.

One particular finding in Ampaw and Jaeger's (2012) study has made overseas status a distinct factor to doctoral students' experiences. As international students were reported to make up more than one-third of the doctoral students enrolled, Ampaw and Jaeger (ibid., p. 644) found that such students "were more likely to complete their programs" compared to U.S. doctoral students. Ampaw and Jaeger (ibid., p. 654) speculated that visa restriction due to international status, "better preparation, and/or the social isolation" might have been the reason for such a result. The implications of this finding point to a need for further exploration focusing on doctoral students' citizenship, visa requirements and restrictions, and the socialisation in both study and everyday life.

The following section discusses how the roles that supervisors play in the lives of doctoral students' is crucial, along with students' high autonomy, self-efficacy, and responsibilities in establishing the identities of doctoral students.

2.2.2. Supervisory Issues and Doctoral Students' Identity Evolution

Handbooks demonstrating how to design and manage research all emphasise the importance of proper supervision and a constructive student-supervisor relationship (Polonsky and Waller, 2015; Bell, 2010). Literature regarding students' successful research experiences also highlights the critical function of the supervisor and the importance of the interpersonal relationships between a doctoral student and the supervisor (Hall & Burns, 2009; Lyons and Scroggins, 1990; Paglis et al., 2006; Polonsky & Waller, 2015). Review of the literature relating to the student-supervisor relationship makes clear that the exact nature of the relationships bares heavily in the relative wellbeing of a doctoral student. Exploring various issues that may arise between the student and her supervisor can help to identity the specific factors that influence doctoral students' identity evolution.

2.2.2.1. The Role of the Supervisor

The role of the supervisor varies with the causes of such variation stemming from differences in culture and discourse among various academic disciplines, differences in personality, expertise, and experience of the supervisor, the level of seniority held by the supervisor in his or her academic field, and finally, variations among supervisors as to the particular nature proper functioning of their position (Becher, 1981; Becher, 1994, Chiang, 2003; Gnutzmann and Rabe, 2014; Huber, 1990; Ives and Rowley, 2005). Understanding the nature of and particular function of the various roles a supervisor will play in the lives of doctoral students helps them to be aware of the particular demands they are likely to encounter during their doctoral journey, and, further, to recognise their own responsibilities along that same journey.

Polonsky and Waller (2015) identify several roles that supervisors assume to teach doctoral students how to do research. They suggest that supervisors can be resourceful and helpful, as well as mindful of what assistance they should provide to students in order to keep the supervised student motivated in the lengthy journey that requires the supervisor's assistance and evaluation. Their research identifies five crucial roles for the supervisor: "Information source", "Sounding board", "Educator", "Motivator", and "Evaluator" (Polonsky and Waller, 2015, p. 35-39). Considering supervisors' expertise and experiences, providing information with regard to sources to assist the student's research topic is the least the supervisor can do. This is the role of an 'information source'. Supervisors also need to provide feedback wherein ideas are discussed back and forth between the student and the supervisor. This practice helps the student to form different perspectives in order to view issues using different lenses. This is the role of a 'sounding board'. In addition, the student's study can invoke further learning that requires reading and taking part in courses. Supervisors in this sense act as 'educators' who lead the student to her/his learning. Moreover, supervisors are to keep the student motivated along the doctoral education journey. This is not an easy role to take, as doctoral students are likely to encounter challenges in different phases and aspects in study, and it is not an

easy task for the supervisor to keep the student reinvigorated. That is probably why Polonsky and Waller (ibid.) consider this 'motivator' role as the most challenging one for supervisors to fulfil. Supervisors are responsible for evaluating the student's research. This is the 'evaluator' role that ensures the student's research meets the criteria of the doctoral level. In brief, the supervisor aims at making certain that the doctoral students complete their theses in accordance with the doctoral level requirements in a timely manner. This way, the supervisor act as "an institutional gatekeeper" (Jazvac-Martek, Chen and McAlpine (2011, p. 23). Implications of the supervisor's roles discussed here shed some light on doctoral students' different needs and their perceived responsibilities.

Polonsky and Waller's (2015) point out the need of a supervisor to play the role of advisor and mentor to support doctoral students' learning experiences. Advisors are "formally assigned faculty members who help doctoral students navigate programmes and meet degree requirements," whereas the mentors are "faculty members who establish more intimate relationships with their students and more consciously contribute to students' professional socialisation" (Hall and Burns, 2009, p. 51). It is generally the case that an advisor is in charge of the student's study progress and everything else that is related to academic learning while, a mentor tends to focus on the student's emotional and psychological well-being. The role of the mentor reflects an understanding that the student's personal situations require attention, as personal situations can influence the student's identities. This raises the debate over whether a separation or a combination of supervisory roles attending to the student's academic and personal needs is more supportive and helpful for the students. Advantages of separation the roles are plenty. The student's different needs are taken care of by designated faculty members. Institutional responsibilities are clearly defined in that different parties are involved in the student's progression and development as a student and a person. Moreover, this may help complement less experienced supervisors' responsibilities. Nevertheless, there are disadvantages in separating supervisor's roles attending to the student's academic and personal needs. Such a separation can be problematic for students, as they have to compartmentalise

their needs depending upon the particular person with whom they choose to consult at any given time.

More questions arise when considering the student's personal and emotional situations as they relate to supervisors' roles. There is a possibility that attending to the student's personal and emotional issues may lead to "intimate relationships" between supervisors and their students (Hall and Burn, 2009, p. 51). Students' personal situations can become explicit matters, rather than hidden ones. While 'intimate relationships' do not have a clear definition as to what extent such an intimacy should reach and involve, both students and faculty members may feel reluctant to get personally and emotionally involved. To what extent is the student willing to reveal personal situations and ask for her mentor's assistance? On the other hand, would supervisors agree with and accept the concept of attending to students' personal issues? Furthermore, do supervisors have the proper psychological preparation and training needed to take care of the students' personal issues? As positive mentoring is associated with positive outcomes related to students' "subsequent productivity and self-efficacy" (Paglis, Green, and Bauer, 2006, p. 451), doctoral students' other experiences, in addition to those of an academic nature, should be taken into consideration by the supervisor. Supervisors showing concern for the student's welfare and wellbeing is highly appreciated by students, as a pastoral role demonstrating sympathy and personal care is identified in supervisor's responsibilities from the student's perspective (Ives & Rowley, 2005). This is also strongly asserted in Jazvac-Martek et al. (2011) where doctoral students' experiences are being tracked over time. They (ibid., p. 19) argue that personal issues are not to be "downplayed" and that "the personal cannot be separated from the academic." In this sense, personal situations deriving from individual student's ongoing learning and living experiences are critical to understand doctoral students' lives, which inform their identity evolution.

As doctoral students' needs are expected to go beyond academic study, how different expectations are received and taken into consideration in supervision are to be looked at in the following section. Examination of

supervisor's roles has raised the need for further exploration in the areas of perceptions of relations between the student and supervisor, and how such interpersonal relationships influence doctoral students' identity evolution.

2.2.2.2. Student-Supervisor Relationship

As supervision involves both supervisors and students, it is an interpersonal relationship that requires mutual and reciprocal recognition and effort (Li and Seale, 2007). Doctoral students who have a close working relationship with faculty members report having "a fuller education" than those who do not (Lyons and Scroggins, 1990, p. 277). Nevertheless, such a 'fuller' doctoral experience requires both parties—student and supervisor—to form a "reasonable balance" in their perceptions of supervision (Bell, 2010, p. 36). Discrepancies in understanding the roles of a supervisor and the corresponding of the student can lead to conflicts and difficulty in the student-supervisor relationship.

The chemistry of the student-supervisor relationship is influenced by interpersonal factors between the supervisor and student in addition to the varying ability of a supervisor to be informative, encouraging, provide feedback, guidance, knowledge and motivation to fulfil the student's academic needs (Bell, 2010; Polonsky & Waller, 2015). From their queries of doctoral students, Ives and Rowley (2005, p. 536), sought from doctoral students' perspective, compiled a list of factors to consider when evaluating student-supervisor relationships that included the level of a supervisor's "knowledge of the research field", "availability", "personal support", and "experience", and "the power dynamic" between the supervisor and the student. Further, the results underscored the importance of a student having sufficient understanding of a supervisor's research interests and the importance of a close match between the research field of the supervisor and the student to provide a basis for feedback (Polonsky & Waller, 2015). A lack of intellectual support and guidance can constrain doctoral students' identity and academic development (Jazvac-Martek et al., 2011). Moreover, there can be

different expectations as to the 'availability' of the supervisor. Although higher education organizations usually have codes of practice indicating suggested frequency and length of time of supervisory meetings (Bell, 2010; Polonsky & Waller, 2015), actual practices vary. Bell (2010, p. 37) suggests that both the supervisor and student need to "clarify what 'supervision' actually means and what it is reasonable for both to expect". Such clarification helps define the degree of availability and support required in the relationship. In other words, communication from the outset is crucial.

Exploring the management of criticism in Ph.D. supervision, Li and Seale (2007, p. 513-514) identified distinct "supervisory styles" that described the elements of clarification, direction, probe, and elicitation, together with "criticism and disagreement", "praise and thanks, apologies, misunderstandings, advice-giving or advice delivery". Similarly, another study that set out to explore dissonance in postgraduate supervision relationships reported summary, support, eliciting, clarification, confrontation and relief of tension as critical to the quality of interaction between the student and supervisor (Wisker, Robinson, Trafford, Creighton and Warnes, 2003). To ensure productive communication and interaction, politeness, a balanced relationship, positive expressions, and constructive ways of delivering advice prove beneficial to the student-supervisor relationships. In this setting, both student and supervisor are responsible for contributing to the implementation of appropriate linguistic and interaction strategies to ensure the student-supervisor relationship is grounded upon "mutual respect and sensitivity" (Li & Seale, 2007, p. 520). Also, important is a mutual effort to avoid the negative consequences of power imbalance that can lead to a dominant-submissive relationship in the supervisor and doctoral student. Li and Seale (2007, p. 521) further point out that an "apprenticeship" can be viewed as a kind of student-supervisor relationship. Doctoral students, described as 'apprentices', exist in an environment where they learn from a master via daily interactions. Apprentice and master have opportunities to meet and discuss with each other issues in which they learn as junior colleagues taking advice from senior colleagues (Chiang, 2003). In such a capacity, doctoral students evolve from being more dependent to more independent (Li & Seale, 2007). A successful

student-supervisor relationship requires both parties to make an effort to establish a friendly, positive, and productive interaction experiences, as both parties share the common goals of completing a quality thesis under a time constraint. In this sense, the student-supervisor relationship hence becomes "a cooperative relationship" highlighting the need of both parties to strive for its success (Li & Seale, 2007, p. 522).

Considering the elements researchers have identified as being predictive of a positive student-supervisor relationship, the question arises for the doctoral student: does choosing a friend to be a supervisor enhance communication and cooperation, and help in the construction of a more positive doctoral experiences? The answer is not clear-cut, as choosing a friend to be the supervisor may destabilise the 'power dynamic' that exists between student and supervisor (Ives & Rowley, 2005). Rather than ensuring a closer working relationship, introduction of 'friendship' in the relationship is likely to confuse the interpersonal working dynamic between the student and supervisor (Ives & Rowley, 2005). Li and Seale (2007, p. 522) also argue that the student-supervisor relationship should not be viewed as "an informal social interaction", even though it requires similar skills for "friendly sociability", but considered much closer to that of a "professional-client relationship" due to mutual accepted and understood obligations, goals, and advantages. To reduce identity confusion, a friendly relationship, rather than being friends, helps verify students and supervisor's respective identities.

In addition, the choice made by a supervisor as to which student to supervise is also an important factor influencing the student-supervisor relationship. Ives and Rowley (2005, p. 539) point out that supervisors tend to choose students based on the research "topic, the student's ability and potential 'personality clashes'". Ives and Rowley (2005, p. 541) further argue that "interpersonal working patterns" are more important than the match between "the supervisor's expertise and the student's Ph.D. topic". This is to highlight again that students' own efforts can enhance not only their academic study but also the working and interpersonal relationship with their supervisors. Such an emphasis on the students' contributions resonates strongly with research that indicates that

individuals' social agent roles are responsible for shaping their own identities (McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009; Woodward, 2000).

Furthermore, the number of acting supervisors a doctoral student has and the academic positions occupied by those supervisors can influence the student-supervisor relationship. Ives and Rowley (2005) point out that some students have only one active supervisor, whereas some have a second supervisor, who can be either active, indicating that the supervisor provides advice and support, but is not necessarily involved in supervisory meetings, or inactive, whereby the supervisor only becomes active when there is a supervisory change. Two supervisors can be complementary to each other in their respective expertise. Having another colleague working as a second active supervisor, for some supervisors, is helpful, especially for those who are less experienced or are supervising students who are encountering problems.   Under this scenario, doctoral students may feel more supported in their doctoral journey and perceive that their identities are positively recognized and enhanced. As to the situation wherein supervisors hold "higher levels of academic appointment", such supervisors are generally more experienced in working with students, suggesting they can be more helpful to enhancing positive student identity development (ibid., p. 546).

The student-supervisor relationship can be suspended or even a breakdown. Reasons leading to such pause or change vary, can be complicated, and can result from the actions of either party. Life changing events regarding health, family, personal relationships, or academic work, are potential causes for intermissions or terminations of the student-supervisor relationships (Ives & Rowley, 2005). When experiencing such an intermission or breakdown, the student identity can come to a temporary halt, demonstrating the fluid quality in identity construction where the student's identity is socially constructed within the doctoral education space. In addition, disagreements and conflicts in the student-supervisor relationship can give rise to a change of supervisor, even when all possible efforts are made to prevent the relationship failure. Consideration of such a move is critical for both the student and supervisor to recognize and decide upon "before depression and a feeling of hopelessness take over" (Bell, 2010, p.

37). Feeling depressed and hopeless can negatively influence to how the student views the continuity of self and relations with others and the bigger worlds. Such potential influences on the formation of a student's sense of identity because of uncertainty in the student-supervisor relationship suggests that doctoral students' lives are informed with not only smooth and positive encounters but also frustration that can affect their experiences and identity development.

Li and Seale (2007, p. 512) emphasise that doctoral education journey is full of "emotional ups and downs, uncertainty, misunderstandings, disappointments, frustration, triumphs and rewards". Such an emotional evolution is unlikely to affect the academic self only. Doctoral students can feel incompetent as students, which influence how they feel as mature adults living and learning during the journey of their doctoral education pursuit. In this setting, Pearson and Brew (2002, p. 139) argue, supervision is better seen from a 'teaching sense' where the "teaching role" merits a myriad of entailed meanings that help identify appropriate supervisor's roles that enhance the student-supervisor relationship. Supervisors structure their activities with the goal of helping students to learn and develop so as "to ensure that more than technique is learnt" (ibid., p, 140). Pearson and Brew (2002) further emphasise that each single student's learning and research project is distinct and dynamic. To ensure the student's study is moving in the desired direction, negotiations and conversations concerning milestones to achieve and priorities of study are necessary (Paglis et al., 2006; Pearson & Brew, 2002). Negotiations and conversations are an ongoing "critical reflection and action" involving the student's prior learning experiences, current research activities, and fluid future goals (Pearson & Brew, 2002).

The point of identifying potential faultiness within student-supervisor relations is not intended to highlight problems and difficulties. Rather, it is to argue that a good student-supervisor relationship can ensure a "demanding" but "valuable" doctoral experience that leads the student to complete the research within the allotted time constraint (Bell, 2010, p. 38). "Successful completion of a Ph.D.", asserted by Li and Seale (2007, p. 512), "depends on the quality of supervision and the interaction within it between supervisors and students". Of

course, many studies have highlighted that divergent expectations of communication and interpersonal relationships between student and supervisor can be the result of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This has raised a need to explore how race, culture, and language, for instance, can influence expectations of appropriate roles of supervisors and doctoral students and of the student-supervisor relationship.

Elements important to the student-supervisor relationships include communication, matches in research interests and personality, and mutual respect. The quality of the interaction between the student and supervisor is discussed in studies examining disciplinary differences (Becher, 1994; Chiang, 2003; Huber, 1990; Kolb, 1981; Walsh, 2010).

2.2.2.3. Supervision in Academic Disciplines

In higher education, it can be argued that academic disciplines are source of affiliation that provides context to establish a "social framework", and function as distinct "academic tribes" that each with a unique cultures (Becher, 1994, p. 151). Drawing on Biglan's (1973) study of "the nature of the subject-matter of research" that labels research nature as "hard pure, soft pure, hard applied and soft applied", and Kolb's (1981) study of "styles of intellectual enquiry" that describes enquiry styles as "abstract reflective, concrete reflective, abstract active and concrete active", areas academic disciplines are categorised as "natural sciences, the humanities and social sciences, the science-based professions and the social professions" (Becher, 1994, p. 152). Explorations of disciplinary cultures reveal the existence of a "disciplinary habitus" (Huber, 1990, p. 241) and a "microclimate" (Walsh, 2010, p. 548) within different disciplines. The concepts of a 'disciplinary habitus' and 'microclimate' point out that different academic disciplines have different structures of cognition and socialisation from which their members develop their identities (Gardner, 2010; Huber, 1990). These varying aspects of

academic disciplines illustrate territorial approaches to teaching and learning, involvement and emphasis of students' work and contribution, communication structures, hidden and assumed patterns and knowledge (Becher, 1989; Becher, 1994; Huber, 1990; Walsh, 2010).

Chiang (2003) conducted a study targeting on doctoral students in Education and Chemistry departments in UK universities to explore learning the students' perceptions of supervision and research environment in order to locate better ways to enhance students' doctoral experiences. In addition, Chiang's (2003) study finds that Chemistry doctoral students report having more positive responses, in issues related to supervision and research environment, than those from Education, in most aspects. Working relationships that emphasise "teamwork" are highly stressed in the average Chemistry department, while an "individualist" style is found in Education (ibid., p. 18). While 'teamwork' suggests a higher level of cooperation and a stronger sense of belonging, 'individualist' implies an independent work style not connecting to others. It can be argued that the emphasis on 'teamwork' exhibited in Chemistry department results in its doctoral students demonstrating closer relationships with and receiving more support from supervisors, colleagues and department staff, whereas Education students tend to feel isolated during the doctoral journey. It appears, therefore, that support systems enhances academic experience are highly valued in the typical Chemistry department.

The disciplinary differences are also researched through the lens of Walsh's (2010, p. 550) theory of cultural "microclimates" that explore in a continuum of overseas students' experiences sought between the senses of "cohesive" and "isolated". According to Walsh (2010), the students from Chemistry department in Chiang's (2003) research can be inferred to having more "inclusive" and "structured" experiences based on their interactions with the supervisors and the fellow colleagues within groups (Walsh, 2010, p. 550). Such features suggest that Chemistry students feel socially and academically included and supported within a teamwork-focused environment. On the other hand, students of Education department in Chiang's (2003) study could be seen under "granular" and

"fragmented" microclimates that give rise to a stronger sense of formality and hierarchy between students and supervisors, and a lack of social relationships among and very little help from the department members (Walsh, 2010, p. 550). While "granular" microclimate indicates none, limited, or rare help, "fragmented" microclimate suggests none, very little and very rare help available to students from the supervisor and the fellow colleagues of the department (ibid., p. 549). Walsh's (ibid., p. 555) research strongly emphasizes that "friendliness" is more appropriate than "deep relationships" to establishing a significant and meaningful experience for overseas students and their supervisors. Walsh (2010) further argues that English competence can be key to some overseas students' positive experience in that higher English level contributes to more interactions with students of the host nation whereas lower English level increases frustration in social integration within department fellow colleagues. That said, it is likely that rather than being equipped with intercultural awareness, overseas students return home "marginalised within their groups" and fail to represent the "institution" (Walsh, 2010, p. 557). In this sense, the overseas students become tourists who form less substantial experiences from their overseas education journeys.

Disciplinary distinctions can also be viewed based on "epistemological considerations" (Becher, 1981, p. 111). For instance, Education students in Chiang's (2003) study model an individualist research structure wherein students mostly work individually and independently, and thus tend to conduct research that parallels rather than intersects the research of their supervisor. In such circumstance, a supervisor functions more as an advisor or consultant with the student-supervisor relationship classified as being more distant than when student and supervisors function as collaborators. Students from more "abstract" and "reflective" (Becher, 1994, p. 152) disciplines are encouraged to approach issues "in an open-ended way" and question knowledge with a critical lens (Becher, 1981, p. 111). Such students are encouraged to make sense of meanings from a complex, rather than simple, point of view (Becher, 1987). For doctoral students from an Education department, for instance, such an approach means that their identities in individual, interpersonal, and community dimensions are developed more independently. In this sense, they tend to be viewed by staff and faculty

members in their disciplinary environment as students rather than whole persons. Being viewed in such a way has the effect of creating a sense of professional solitude for describe students in Education (Chiang, 2003). On the other hand, Chemistry students report feeling recognized as full members of the research community and as peers of the faculty (Chiang, 2003). Their individual identities reflect a sense of competence; their interpersonal identities are confirmed by a sense of belonging; and, their community identities enunciate its emergence by faculty members' recognition (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

Becher's studies (1981; 1987; 1994) not only argue for the existence of disciplinary differences and distinct disciplinary cultures but they also demonstrate that disciplinary differences and cultures can influence the student-supervisor relationship and students' identity development in individual, interpersonal, and community dimensions. As such, doctoral students' experiences within their respective disciplines inform their identity evolution. Both Chiang (2003) and Walsh (2010) identify overseas status as a distinct area of enquiry in their studies. Chiang (2003) enquires specifically about overseas doctoral students' perceptions of learning experiences in their respective departments presuming that they exist as a particular student group that may encounter distinctive situations. Additionally, Walsh (2010, p. 548) warns that overseas doctoral students may be less likely to undergo integration resulting in "granular" and "fragmented" microclimates, for instance. The need to explore overseas status of doctoral students' then is explicit and critical.

The student-supervisor relationship, lived experiences and learning milestones in the Ph.D. journey strongly influence doctoral students' identities. Specifically, understanding various aspects of the distinct roles of the supervisor, positive and negative aspects of the student-supervisor relationship, and differences in the cultures and communities that exist among various academic disciplines are essential areas of study by scholars to document the experiences and identity development of doctoral students'. As previously noted, doctoral student are more appropriately viewed as whole persons, and, as such, the following section will investigate socio-economic factors and other non-academic

aspects of the doctoral journey to explore how these experiences affect the students' identity development.

2.2.3. Socio-Economic Factors

Non-academic aspects of doctoral students' lives can provide another perspective through which to view how their lived experiences of learning and living inform their identity evolution. I discuss in this section concepts of inquiry found in the academic literature concerning the experiences of doctoral students that are argued to be influential to the students' growth and development. Previous studies identify socio-economic factors as those which concern the students' social networks and support systems, financial factors, and life changing events.

2.2.3.1. Social Networks and Support Systems

Doctoral students demonstrate their agentic power by exploring opportunities and establishing networks that add positivity to their beings (McAlpine, 2012b). Such networks provide psychological support and also exist in their personal lives. Family and friends are perfect examples of such social networks and support systems (Jazvac-Martek et al., 2011).

Doctoral students, coming from their various backgrounds, experience the need for adjustment, which is evidenced in Turner et al's (2012, p. 17) notion of "relocations". In this setting, doctoral students need to develop new ways of living. To do so, they need new networks, in addition to their familiar ones, to function as support systems that will assist them in navigating their doctoral education. Turner et al. (ibid) highlight that doctoral students who have social networks and support systems tend to be able to "persevere during difficult times". For instance, married doctoral students often receive support from their spouses who can take care of "childcare or domestic chores to free up time" allowing such students to focus on

their studies (ibid.). In addition, friends from home and friends nearby can also be a support for those who pursue doctoral education in a location that is distant from home (Hopwood, Alexander, Harris-Huemmert, McAlpine, and Wagstaff, 2011). While family and friends offer emotional support (Jazvac-Martek et al., 2011), McAlpine (2012b) argues that support from family and friends can also have an adverse influence on doctoral students. The maintenance of family and friend relationships and networks is a long-term commitment that can give rise to tensions for doctoral students and destabilise the work-relation balance.

In addition to the supervisor and faculty members, family and friends are important elements to affect doctoral students' everyday life. Both joy and tensions contribute to levels of support such systems bring to the students.

2.2.3.2. Financial Factors

Financial factors are an important component factor in the doctoral journey. Without financial support, doctoral education is unlikely to begin, continue, and complete properly. Also, the expected level of financial remuneration in professional market is an important factor to consider by individuals who embark on the doctoral journey.

Financial factors to consider include financial aids, labour market outlook and the foregone earnings. Necessary expenses to acquire a doctoral education include tuition fees, accommodation, food, and utilities. There are also transportation and leisure activity costs to consider. Prospective students can find information to project these expenses from various sources, including the university websites. Students who do not need to worry about how to pay for their tuition fees and living expenses, tend to report higher completion rate in their doctorate compared with those who are not supported (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). This suggests that there is a link between doctoral students' level of financial security and rates retention and level of wellbeing, both of which can influence the

construction of their identities as they may struggle between the needs of being professionals or students. Moreover, income that is not obtained while a student is pursuing the doctorate is foregone earnings. Many students have financial obligation towards their families. To what extent do such students have the liberty to pursue a doctorate? How easy is it for them to meet their financial obligations during the period of doctoral education? What additional expenses are required for them to pursue the doctorate? Financial security or insecurity in this sense becomes one of key factors connecting doctoral students' being and identities throughout his or her doctoral education. In addition, positive labour market conditions, higher expected income level and social status function as incentives to encourage the pursuit of a doctoral education as well as an incentive to accelerate the completion of the doctorate. Conversely, doctoral students may prolong the study to avoid facing difficult times. In such instances, a student's professional identity becomes more explicit than the academic student identity, as career opportunities and horizons for actions become prevalent issues of concern (McAlpine, 2012a).

Ampaw and Jaeger (2012) find that financial factors are relevant to doctoral students' retention rate. Financial aid, the labour market and expected income, often transient in nature, inform doctoral students' identity evolution throughout the doctoral education journey. Thus, financial aids influence doctoral students' lives and outlooks on life. Their identity development as students and competent individuals, in this sense, fluctuates.

2.2.3.3. Life Changing Events

Haynes (2006), drawing from her own experiences in accounting, academia and motherhood, explores the lived experience and identity of accountants. According to Haynes (2006), becoming a parent is one of many events that can significantly influence choices and priorities in one's life resulting in a major impact upon one's

sense of self. This invites discussion concerning the implication of life changing events on doctoral students' identity evolution.

Assuming new roles by becoming a husband, wife, or a parent, or similarly, experiencing a divorce, break-up, and health problems are examples of life-changing events (Haynes, 2006; McAlpine, 2012b). Callary et al. (2012) investigate biography and constant reflection to explore the life experiences of a doctoral student. The biography tracks insights of the student's journey of change in study focus and personal life. Both Haynes (2006) and Callary et al. (2012) argue that the primary meaning of life-changing events is the potential they have to change a doctoral student's priorities and outlook on life. The effects of life-changing experiences may be overlooked in the case of doctoral students given that issues related to the student's academic identity, to study such as the student's research, suggestions from the supervisor, and availability of resources are paramount. Turner et al. (2012) explore the hidden stories that are often overlooked in research focusing on doctoral students and report that the effects can prove challenging for some doctoral students and encouraging, to others. Nevertheless, of the nature of the impact upon the student, its effects are long-term, broad, and deep (McAlpine, 2012a). Being ill and becoming a new parent can lead to an interruption of the doctoral journey or to a change of supervisor (Ives & Rowley, 2005). A divorce can destabilize doctoral students' wellbeing and sense of self. Having to relocate to pursue a Ph.D. can cause physical, psychological and even financial tension. Life-changing events demonstrate the complex, subtle, and delicate aspects of the doctoral student experience. Indeed, the frequent sense of uncertainty and transience bespeak their evocation of agency to construct their identity (McAlpine, 2012b; Turner et al., 2012).

Making a decision to embark on the doctoral education journey itself can symbolize a life-changing event, as full-time status changes priorities in life for doctoral students. Questions of how to allocate time for study, family, social activities, personal time, and relaxation are a delicate issue. Time management in this setting is key, as both everyday living and studying must both be managed. As such, it is logical to assume doctoral students' feelings, attitudes, sense of self,

and ways of doing things require transformation. Doctoral students can become self-protective and acquire a tendency to remain in their comfort zones. This was the conclusion of Anthia (2001) and Lossau's (2009) who also suggested that self-protection is a characteristic of the phenomenon of hybrid identities. For some, it is not an easy task to resist being indoctrinated in the culture of their academic discipline, especially as it relates to acceptable means of acquiring knowledge in the field, and the discipline's manifestation of student-supervisor relationships, for instance. Self-protection then becomes a method for these doctoral students to escape from living with uncertainty and the pressure to change. It is under such circumstances that isolation and alienation can take hold (Berry, 2009).

The long-term influences that accompany significant life-changing events demonstrate that, once again, the doctoral education is a setting where the identities of its inhabitants are faced with old and new, similar and different, strange and familiar, as well as agreeable and uncomfortable circumstances. Thriving under such conditions requires constant negotiation in order for hybrid identities to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct.

Section 2.2. of this work addressed the lived experiences of doctoral students including milestones that must be reached in various phases of a doctoral education, issues that may arise in the student-supervisor relationship, and social-economic considerations. These factors are important in doctoral students' ability to feel grounded in their academic and everyday life. Studies reviewed in 2.2. also point out that overseas doctoral students are a distinct student group. Ampaw and Jaeger (2012) reckon that international doctoral students are more prepared, and devote more time to study and less to social interaction because they are highly aware of the limited time their student visa's afford them to remain their university's country. Immigration issues are only one reason Chiang (2003) recognizes that the overseas status of doctoral students may best explain why such students possess different opinions and attitudes about the doctoral education learning experiences and that particular experience as manifested within the students' academic disciplines. Furthermore, Li and Seale (2007) point out that both language and culture are important factors that

can influence student-supervisor relationships and the ultimate role assumed by the supervisor in such relationships. It is, thus, necessary to explore the extent to which overseas status has an impact upon the doctoral students' identity evolution. In the following section, overseas status and doctoral students' lived experiences of learning and living are the focus of exploration.

2.3. International Doctoral Students' Learning and Living Experiences

Overseas doctoral students, on a surface level, are distinguished as foreign compared with those students who are from the host country. The overseas status gives rise to immigration and residency requirements and restrictions (UK Permits, 2015). Overseas doctoral students' agentic power is demonstrated, first of all, in the decision to pursue education and life overseas. Their role as a social agent does not stop functioning, but continues to accompany them in all of their social engagements, engagements where their identities restlessly transform to hybrid styles. Turner et al. (2012) utilise the 'relocation' concept to highlight the depth and range of engagement that doctoral students must endure in their pursuit of knowledge, language acquisition, and encounters with cultural differences and conflicts. These experiences become more pronounced and emergent when geographical borders are crossed (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Bauman, 2009; Cargill, 2000; Chiang, 2003; Evans & Stevenson, 2011; Gu et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2012; Walsh, 2010). While such a move is usually accompanied by a rising sense of excitement, at the same time, it can initiate a loss of familiarity. Venturing into a different place marks an opportunity to a new lifestyle. To explore how these students' lives evolve while living and studying in a country that is different from their home countries, concepts of hybrid identities and milestones in the doctoral education journey are a useful framework. Literature focusing on international students, international education, and study abroad (SA) experiences were also incorporated to further define identity evolution from the overseas students' perspective.

2.3.1. The Students' Epistemological Experiences

"An epistemology", according to Crotty (1998, p. 3), "is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know". Previous studies suggest that linguistic and cultural differences are factors leading to distinctive learning and living experiences of students crossing national boundaries to pursue education overseas (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Cargill, 2000; Chiang, 2003; Evans and Stevenson, 2011; Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010; Turner et al., 2012). In considering what ways language is influential to and in what ways culture plays a role in "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) lead me to explore the entire linguistic spectrum of overseas doctoral students' epistemological experiences from communication to speaking to writing.

2.2.1. discussed different milestones that can be achieved in the Ph.D. journey. Doctoral students need to be aware of and familiar with personal and academic demands, establish and maintain networks to support their study, and strive to submit their thesis and successfully the viva in order to obtain the doctorate (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Overseas doctoral students are no exception. Their journey requires them to study and write, and connect and communicate, as these practices are endemic to the process. In the UK, many overseas doctoral students come from countries where English is not the first or official language. English, therefore, is required in order for them to master in order to understand and justify how they arrive at the current knowledge in their academic discipline (Evans & Stevenson, 2011; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine, 2009; Walsh, 2010). Mastering a language and using it to explore knowledge at the doctoral level is never a simple task. While learning a new language leads overseas doctoral students to negotiate their identities, culture adjustments can impact deeper levels of being, as "local cultural references", "levels of formality" and kinds of humour involve students to explore and justify for the sake of understanding and explaining for the self and towards study (Walsh, p. 553). Although language level

should not be problematic, as theses students are required to pass a strict benchmark in order for them to embark on the overseas education journey in the UK, the real problem lies in adopting new modes or forms of expression, exploration, and explanation. These demands are a crucial component of a doctoral student's epistemological experiences and heavily influence student's identity evolution (Gu et al., 2010; Hung & Hyun, 2010; Walsh, 2010).

Being more "assertive" in both writing and speaking is emphasised as important for overseas students (Hung and Hyun, 2010, p. 346). Being 'more assertive' implies that the student becomes more expressive and presents as more authoritative regarding the knowledge that is being expressed and explained. Thus, being more assertive increases the doctoral student's sense of confidence allowing the student to become more comfortable in claiming authority in both writing and speaking situations. How knowledge is acquired varies based on cultural background (Gu et al., 2010; Walsh, 2010). Ways to knowing vary as well. Some students may encounter conflicting thoughts and feelings towards different ways of pursuing knowledge. On the other hand, it may be a pleasant surprise for other students as they get to learn more ways acquiring knowledge that can help them to reach their target. This has made "how we know what we know" an explicit factor in the formation of students' identities (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). In Hall and Burn's (2009, p. 58) study of the doctoral education experience and supervisory mentoring, they underscore the important role that "racial and cultural diversity" plays in the student's identity development during the doctoral journey. They (ibid.) further emphasize that overseas students can encounter challenges in their epistemological experiences as conflicts may take place between "who they are and whom they perceive their doctoral programmes demand they become". In this sense, conflict in expressing how knowledge is acquired and belief justified exists between overseas doctoral students' milieu and that in the English context. Such a gap destabilises these students' original ways of expressions. At the same time, the need to meet new demands presents uncertainty. As such, doubts form as to who they are and who they are becoming (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Does questioning original ways of exploring knowledge indicate abandonment or even a betrayal to the overseas doctoral students' original background? Does

attempting to keep original ways of justification suggest being less agentic, autonomous, confident and assertive? Being required to negotiate in a space where conflicting issues, once hidden and implicit are now conspicuous and explicit, destabilise these competent students, nationals and individuals. These overseas doctoral students hence undergo a process of transition where their epistemological experiences are conflicted, challenged, and negotiated. Epistemological experiences in this sense contribute to their identity evolution.

A gap has been identified in overseas doctoral students' epistemological experiences, suggesting these students' ways of justifying and exploring knowledge and belief emerge to become prevalent issues, as their identities are being negotiated between original and new perceptions of knowledge and demands.

2.3.2. Socio-Economic Factors

What happens in the dynamic period of time and space where overseas doctoral students' perceptions regarding self, others and the environment meet and collide? Their experiences of living and learning are explored in this section in terms of socio-economic factors focusing on social integration, socio-cultural adjustment, support system, and financial issues.

2.3.2.1. Social Integration

While milestones in the Ph.D. process focus on overseas doctoral students' academic experiences, it is possible that outside academic experiences are neglected.

Gu et al. (2010, p. 16-17) report that three months into their academic education, there is a growth in international students' "intercultural and academic confidence"; however, issues such as "feelings of powerless", coupled with "lack of a sense of belonging", remain consistent for the following two academic years of these students' lives. Overseas doctoral students live and learn under circumstances where different contexts meet. Groups in contact hence are all important to these students' being. This is emphasised in Berry's (2009) acculturation strategies and acculturation stressors. Overseas students can experience "assimilation", a higher tendency to conform to the host culture than retaining their own cultural identity; "separation", a preference of adhering to the students' own cultures and socialisation with co-nationals over interacting with the others; "integration", an interest in both cultures of origin and the host culture showing certain levels of "cultural integrity" are retained and the students' positions and the bigger networks are connected; and, "marginalisation", lack of interests in maintaining cultural relations with others (Berry, 2009, p. 366). On the other hand, assimilation turns into "the melting pot" when sought by the host group; separation becomes 'segregation" when "forced" by the dominant group; integration transforms into "multiculturalism" thereby manifesting an acceptance of the cultural diversity within the bigger society; and, marginalisation becomes "exclusion" "when imposed by the dominant group" (ibid., p. 367).

Walsh (2010) studies overseas doctoral students' experiences including academic contextual and cultural factors and finds that a low integration level with the host group has a negative impact upon overseas doctoral students' academic performance and experience. This has provided, partially, an opposite viewpoint of Ampaw and Jaeger's (2012) assumption that one main reason overseas students have a higher completion rate may lie less social integration that otherwise assumed. Walsh (2010) also finds that overseas doctoral students who report having lower integration with the host group have lower levels of confidence and competence, and are likely to experience marginalisation. This issue of recognition hinders overseas doctoral students' identity development in their academic performance. These students, in particular, need to recognise themselves and be recognized by others as competent beings. More interactions

and communications with others in both academic and social environment can help them build and improve their confidence levels. By listening to others, and increasing their encounters with other individuals, they may increase their sense of belonging.

Indeed overseas students are required to complete the doctorate within the timeframe of the student visa and to avoid additional payment for extending the visa. To do so, it is likely that overseas doctoral students dedicate much of their time to study and restrict their socialisation with individuals outside the academic circle. Adhering to such a schedule can lead to isolation, alienation, separation, and marginalization. Such results are self-inflicted and derive from the fallacy of thinking that less integration means higher autonomy, more time for study, and a better study outcome.

2.3.2.2. Socio-Cultural Adjustment

Savicki, Adams and Binder (2009, p. 156), speaking from the views of international education, argue that focusing on "socio-cultural adjustment", in the "earliest stages of transition" is "most difficult", but "within 4 to 6 months" of the academic journey "it reaches a plateau". This suggests that a strong feeling of difference and strangeness between contexts is likely "to follow a reasonably predictable learning curve". They predict that after six months, overseas students should feel much less intimidated by the encounters in the new environment. A linear progression emerges in overseas students' identity development. However, this transitional issue is better viewed as a temporal phenomenon, as continued existence may lead students to encounter events that can have major impacts upon their ways of being, seeing and doing things. Instead of a linear progression, a dynamic and cyclical one may better illustrate overseas students' identity evolution, as transition is better understood as a repetitive as opposed to a one-off process.

2.3.2.3. Support System

Social integration in the academic environment requires a support system to enhance doctoral students' progression, and in turn, becomes critical to these students' identity evolution. Support systems are also key to students' successful living and development overseas.

Members of the social circles of these students include co-nationals, host nationals, and other nationals (Chambers and Chambers, 2008). Co-nationals provide social, psychological and emotional support, familiarity and confirmation of who they are for the overseas doctoral student (Myles and Cheng, 2003). On the other hand, a student's support group can prevent exposure to diverse culturally others. In this sense, isolation can occur. A second cluster of support system includes family members. Myles and Cheng (2003) find that married overseas students tend to social with other families. This way, they tend to have a bound social life. In addition, Turner et al. (2012) take note of the roles of the spouse among overseas students. According to their study, the spouse plays the role of supporting and is in charge of taking care of housework and family affairs while the student is focusing on academic study. This scenario is likely to spur an interesting discussion of gender roles in different cultures and contexts and how these might be reinforced or challenged by the overseas education experience. The questions bring into relief the level of commitment to the cultural traditions of their country of origin. If students are overwhelmed with new demands and challenges how will they arrive at decisions required to deal with matters ahead? How do they face life-changing events and at the same time deal with their studies?

2.3.2.4. Financial Issues

Finally, 2.2.3.2. has explored that financial issues have their major impacts upon students' doctoral education (Ampaw and Jaeger, 2012). Overseas doctoral students are recognised, at the institutional perspective, as overseas and authorised for admission only when in possession of a student visa. In the UK where my study is based, overseas status often dictates a higher tuition charge than the one that applies to home students (Walsh, 2010). In the UK, international students are referred to as students coming from countries outside UK and EU. Armenia, United States, and Japan are examples. International students' tuition fees are relatively higher than home and EU levels (UK Permits, 2015).

Differences in the fees charged to overseas doctoral students function as an incentive that encourages students to complete the doctorate as fast as they can; however, it can also be a source of stress for some students who find it difficult to complete the degree within the most cost effective timeframe. In addition, those who have prior professional experiences are restricted to limited working hours. Not being able to work full time can frustrate students' competences and self-belief. Moreover, restricted working hours in a lower level of income, which is stressful for doctoral students who are responsible for their own tuition fees and living expenses (Walsh, 2010). It is likely that overseas doctoral students find it even more difficult to be financially independent without any financial aid (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Furthermore, fulltime student status obligates students to spend most of their time in the country where doctoral education takes place. This means these students may need to stay away from home for a lengthy period of time. Home, in this sense, becomes a destination to 'visit' rather than just 'go' during doctoral education journey. In some cases, doctoral students receive funding from institutions that have terms and conditions that require the student to complete the doctorate within a set period of time and require that student to assume a professional position within the institutions. This way, money becomes even more tightly linked with the time management issue in overseas doctoral students' situation. The students literally need to meet the deadline. Otherwise, they need to face consequences.

Changing environment and being immersed in a new context can be challenging and at the same time, refreshing. Byram (2003, p. 56) draws on Berger and Luckman's notion of "re-socialization" and argues that residing in another cultural environment indicates a "normal process of secondary socialization" in which values and beliefs can be altered to different levels. Kim (2008, p. 382) resonates and notes that being in another cultural context "is like starting an enculturation process all over again". Social circles, socialization, friends, family members, and the spouse become important elements comprising a fuller picture in the analysis of overseas doctoral students' lives, and have helped this study to frame its analysis of evolving identity in an overseas context. Overseas doctoral students' growth and development from the safety of home is absent. A different outlook on life is derived from such a space and period of time and distance emerges to create within these students a different perspective from which to look back and review their repertoire (Davcheva, 2003; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003).

2.3.3. Personal Growth and Development

It is argued that a "longer time span" influences overseas doctoral students' personal development due to interacting and processing cultural diversity and differences in a different context (Savicki and Selby, 2008, p. 345). The students' epistemological experiences are found to be more "assertive and proactive" (Hung and Hyun, 2010, p. 346) and self-efficacy arguably increases after being situated overseas for more than two years (Milstein, 2005). In this setting, overseas students encounter personal growth and development, which implies a hybrid journey in their identity evolution.

In academic, social and personal aspects, personal growth and development are often the outcome of overseas student experiences (Armstrong, 1984; Gonyea, 2008; Gu et al., 2010; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). In particular, it has been argued that these students get to develop, though to varying degrees,

intercultural awareness, intercultural competence (Friedman and Antal, 2005; Gill, 2007), global awareness (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004), a cosmopolitan identity (Dolby, 2005), as well as an intercultural identity and intercultural personhood (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008). It is also suggested that they become intercultural mediators (Alred and Byram, 2002), be culturally agile (Chambers & Chambers, 2008), and have the goal to become global citizens (Belamy and Weiberg, 2006). These attributes illuminate that when building on meaningful intercultural experience, individuals are able to see beyond national and cultural differences, locate commonalities, overcome embedded cultural repertoire for interaction, mediate between cultures and most importantly, have a settled and stabilized self identity (Byram, 2003; Gupta, 2003; Kim, 2008).

There are two apparent trajectories that demonstrate growth of personal qualities. The first trajectory describes asserts that overseas students' perceptions of different contexts move from destabilization acknowledgement. Davcheva (2003, p. 77) argues that there is a gap between "convenient authority of their previous competences" and "the alternative uncertainty". To bridge the gap, overseas students need to consciously analyse and evaluate their experiences so that they can reduce feelings of uncertainty. Murphy-Lejeune's (2003, p. 113) argument also highlights that feeling detached and a sense of loss also enables these students to go through "a maturing process" that expands their horizons and potential. This is to emphasise that the sense of realisation begins with destabilisation. These students learn to acknowledge "exciting experiences to come" in different contexts (ibid.). In this sense, ambivalence and emancipation are not a source of disturbance and uncertainty, but better viewed as steps in the formation of positive hybrid identities. Overseas students thus become more tolerant, curious, and flexible, resulting in a development of dynamic ways of viewing what they are facing (Byram, 1997).

Moreover, the second trajectory describes the growth of personal qualities whereby overseas students' views of their home culture move from feeling familiar to strange, thereby facilitating a more critical analysis. This suggests that being in a different context calls into question some assumptions and taken-for-granted

viewpoints. What was once "invisible", "unconscious" and "automatic" become explicit, obvious and made "visible and conscious" (Gupta, 2003, p. 162). Such experiences can be exhilarating, and, at the same time, destabilising. For instance, when overseas students' ethnic and cultural identities are challenged by cultural, national, and language outsiders, overseas students may display little tolerance towards criticism and consider such challenges to be examples of insults and prejudice (Byram, 2003). However, enduring such "an uncomfortable process" helps these students to become aware of knowledge and assumptions that used to be implicit to them (Gupta, 2003, p. 162). Empowered by such experiences and constant reflections, they become insiders who are able to "take an outsider perspective" (Dovcheva, 2003, p. 75). In this sense, "a critical distance" is formed allowing these students to "question what used to be seen as natural and taken for granted" and, eventually, acquire "a critical perspective for themselves" (ibid., p. 76).

Both trajectories illustrate that meaningful experiences can be dynamic and liberating. In this sense, such experiences have profound influence on overseas students and their outlook on life, as they discover themselves more by virtue of understanding others (Alred, 2003). This way, overseas status can influence not only cultural, but also individual aspects, which can include future academic pursuits, friendship attainment, professional development, political views and decisions concerning family lives (Dwyer, 2004). Hence, it can be advocated here that the overseas context opens up a dynamic and complex space and period of time for overseas students to go through changes and transformation related to academic, personal, social and cultural aspects of the doctoral education journey.

2.3.4. The Dynamics of Overseas Students' Time and Space

Doctoral education requires students to take time to think, hold their thoughts before jumping to conclusions, negotiate a multitude of thoughts and feelings, and come up with their own original and organic meanings, even though

they may not be aware that they are engaging in such an evolutionary and hybrid process. It appears that time and space can contribute to overseas doctoral students' hybridity, and become crucial to the construction of their identity trajectories.

Overseas students move within and between different time zones and where past knowledge and experiences stream in and among present encounters to help locate appropriate and possible future directions. Rather than "conveying linear order and teleological succession" (Lossau, 2009, p. 63), overseas students' time is a dynamic concept. Hue (2008, p. 232) argues a "framework of moving 'inward', 'outward', 'backward' and forward'" in exploring immigrant students' lives and how they experience changes. The framework can be applied to view overseas doctoral students development in that 'inward' and 'outward' refer to the ways in which the overseas lived experiences influence how these students feel and what they think about the new context. 'Backward' and 'forward' are attentive to view how these students connect stories of their past experience to present situations an dhow their future perceptions are shaped (ibid.). Similarly, McAlpine (2012b, p. 38) asserts that "earlier experiences and intentions", together with "future imagined careers", frame the doctoral education and journey. Moreover, Dwyer (2004, p. 157-159) finds that "future academic endeavours", the attainment of life long friendship, and "career development" are tightly connected to length of time being overseas. Even political views and decisions regarding family life can be transformed due to longer engagement within different contexts. In short, time brings ambivalence and emancipation to overseas students.

In the case of overseas doctoral students, they carry spatial qualities derived from historical, geographical, and demographic concepts embedded in external structures and systems. In other words, space is attached with "social, cultural and psychological meanings" (Hauge, 2007, p. 1). In this sense, space leads to identity transformation and connects the bigger environment and individuals. According to Hauge's (analysis 2007, p. 7), "being in new and different places affects identity through attenuation/accentuation, threat and dislocating". Such fluid and dynamic ways of describing the meaning of a change

in environment resonate greatly with Turner et al. (2012) and McAlpine (2012a) in that a strong sense of displacement takes place when individuals coming from a variety of backgrounds engage with each other in a context that is different from their homes. This is illustrated in the notion of "relocation" in "cultural", "linguistic", "intellectual", "networking", and "institutional" senses that emerge within and between countries, languages, disciplines, relationships and educational institutions (Turner et al., 2012, p. 17). In short, space is attached with values, beliefs, and emotions, and is a critical construct indicative of overseas doctoral students' ambivalent and emancipated journeys. This way, it is logical to argue that culture influences the identities of overseas doctoral students and their eventual adjustment to new ideas and environments.

Overseas doctoral students move from their points of origin to ever-changing destinations. Being within and between two points they continue the act of approaching. Instead of focusing on final outcomes, time and space constructs foreground not only academic study but also engagement in personal and social aspects of life as they move through the hybrid identity journey. In this sense, destabilisation characterises hybridisation and contributes to framing analysis of identity evolution.

2.3.5. Supervisory Issues

Li and Seale (2007, p. 512) argue that "language barriers" and "a lack of culturally specific knowledge" are crucial elements in the interactions between supervisor and students and can influence doctoral students' development. This affirms previous studies that suggest that linguistic and cultural differences are factors leading to distinctive learning and living experiences of students crossing national boundaries to pursue education overseas (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Cargill, 2000; Chiang, 2003; Evans and Stevenson, 2011; Robinson-Pant, Sayed and Morris, 2010; Gu et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2012).

Hall and Burn (2009) point out that overseas doctoral students can experience not only epistemological but also personal clashes deriving from different cultural expectations during their doctoral education timeframe. While some students are capable of finding a balance between academic success and retention of their identities, others may encounter the need to distance or even give up parts of their identities in order to meet academic requirements. In this sense, appropriate support and guidance from the supervisor can be critical to these particular students' development. Overseas doctoral students' conflicting thoughts and feelings can be nullified by their supervisors to minimise the negative impacts such conflicts can have on their identity evolution.

In academic study, Myles and Cheng (2003, p. 249) report that overseas students employ "an apprenticeship approach" to establishing positive relationships with professors and supervisors. Such an approach is echoed in Chiang's (2003) study focusing on doctoral students' learning experiences. 'Apprenticeship' suggests a closer and friendly student-supervisor relationship. Focusing on the general international students population, a common finding regarding the role of overseas status suggests that these students appreciate higher cultural sensitivity and a global vision from professors, supervisors, and the faculty members towards taught courses, students' diverse cultural backgrounds, and their international status (Bennett, 2008; Dwyer, 2004; Gonyea, 2008; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Palglis et al., 2006; Quaye, 2007). This way, understanding the students' expectations deriving from their cultural backgrounds helps to bridge communication distance emerged between overseas doctoral students and their supervisors.

In the case of overseas doctoral students, their systems of support offer fewer advantages, as very often these students' families and friends, functioning as the students' support systems, are not necessarily readily or easily available. This can be a predictor of increased emotional fluctuations, and may explain why some supervisors consider overseas doctoral students more difficult to supervise (Walsh, 2010). This can negatively impact the student-supervisor relationship. Walsh (2010) therefore suggests that a more inclusive microclimate should be

more constructive to help create a sense of belonging and enhance community identity. In a similar vein, Cargill (2000) explores discourse practices in supervisory meetings of two student-supervisor pairs where students are non-native English speakers and the supervisor native English speakers. Cargill (2000) argues that language and cultural differences between the students the supervisor can cause misunderstandings and mismatches in their interaction and communication. It is found that the students do not ask questions or engage in discourse unless the supervisor enquires explicitly or prompts them to do so, with students often being reluctant to respond, and, as such, there are silence and long pauses in the interactions between the student and the supervisor. Possible explanations for such behaviour from the students' point of view can include a tendency to avoid of showing a lack of understanding, as well a desire to avoid challenging and questioning the supervisor. In situations where the student's language level is much higher, "cultural values and norms" rather than the "foreign-ness" is often the explanation (ibid., p. 34). In this sense, language ability plays a role in the student-supervisor relationship. When language is not a factor, different cultural expectations, again, provides a possible explanation, especially in the case of overseas doctoral students.

To conclude, supervisors are critical to doctoral students' identity development (Cargill, 2000; Hall & Burn, 2009; Ives & Rowley, 2005; Li and Seale, 2007; Walsh, 2010). Specifically for overseas doctoral students, different expectations deriving from difference in culture have an impact upon the roles occupied by the supervisor, the student-supervisor relationship, and identity evolution.

I aim to explore the extent to which occupying overseas status influences doctoral students' identity evolution. To do so I reviewed literature in relation to identity matters, hybrid and fluid conceptions of identities, third space, doctoral students' experiences, and overseas students' experiences. The first part (2.1.) of this chapter was devoted to providing readers with a foundation to view identity with an evolutionary lens. The second part (2.2.) of this chapter focused on the general population of doctoral students. I explore their lived experiences of learning and

living. Together, a link between doctoral education and identity evolution was established. Both parts also addressed hybrid conceptions of identity and elements and factors contributing to doctoral students' lives and identity evolution. Both parts provide a framework to explore overseas doctoral students' lives, experiences, and identity evolution in 2.3..

2.4. Summary and Research Question

Traditional immigrants usually remain in the country they emigrate to once territorial boundaries are crossed, whereas overseas doctoral students in my study show a higher tendency to move between their countries of origin, UK, and other countries during the period of time that their status is categorised and authorised as 'student'. In addition, typical sojourners live "within a location and culture different from their own for a period of 6 months to 5 years with the intention to return home" (Milstein, 2005, p. 218), whereas overseas doctoral students are more likely to have the choice to stay living in the country where professional opportunities are offered after the doctorate is awarded (Altbach, 2005). They are the 'new nomads' who seek career and professional opportunities as lush green pastures, and are considered mature in life and competent with knowledge and skills. The constituents of their maturity and competence can be comprised of accumulated lived experiences during the doctoral journey, wherein their identities encounter negotiations and (re)constructions. Their identities are likely to be so robust that function as a tool to facilitate the student's ability to cope. On the other hand, the tool of their robust identities may prevent them from forming critical views, resulting in alienation.

Doctoral education requires students to form original ideas, challenge these ideas to the extent that the research outcome can fill in gaps where previous studies have failed to do so. In this sense, a piece of research is indeed making a solid contribution to the student's academic field. The journey that a doctoral student takes which extends from setting a research purpose, to accomplishing

the research successfully is a journey wherein students encounter ongoing learning and becoming (Callary et al., 2012). The journey of constant learning and becoming is reflective of third space notions wherein identity is conceived of as a process of experiencing conflicting thoughts, feeling liberated, and then managing to form hybrid ways of seeing and doing things. Changed landscape, climate, levels of assertion in writing, and cultures found in various academic disciplines, as well as institutions, describe 'relocation' (Turner et al., 2012), manifesting a sense of destabilisation that the doctoral education process presents to students who are faced with a variety of adjustment needs in areas of culture, pedagogy, language and socialisation (Evans and Stevenson, 2011). Doctoral education entails a period of time and space where significant "development and learning" take place in every part of the students' lives (Callary et al., 2012, p. 2). Multiple facets of doctoral students' lives are intertwined and contribute to the study of doctoral students' identity evolution.

I argue that overseas status destabilises doctoral students' lives and leads their identities to encounter more complicated, dynamic, and challenging situations thus requiring a process of social, psychological and cultural adjustment. Gu et al. (2010, p. 19) emphasise that very often overseas students need to adjust to "new and sometimes threatening norms of behaviours, languages and academic pedagogies on a number of personal, social and emotional levels" (Gu et al., 2010, p. 19). In this setting, the doctoral education journey creates a space or period of dynamic flux. Overseas status as it relates to the doctoral students' identity formation is in need of an in-depth exploration. To achieve my goal of exploring overseas doctoral students' identity evolution, I set out to answer the following principal research question sought:

What are the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution?

In addition to the principal research question, there are areas of focus deriving from the literature review that influenced my exploration. Hall (1990, p. 222) highlights that identity is "a 'production', which is never complete, always in

process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation". Kim (2008, p. 363) stresses that identity is "dynamic and evolving". In this era where tradition is being emphasised to help some countries to find their positions in the global village (Ke, 2008), overseas status juxtaposes the old and new, then and now, and here and there (Bhabha, 2004; Kim, 2008). In this sense, overseas status destabilises doctoral students' identities. Lived experiences in both studying and living help to explore overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. As Gu et al. (2010, p. 7) point out, higher education itself is "a journey of self-discovery" that individuals involved intend to survive, learn from doing, and thrive. These researchers and respective studies have made personal, academic, social, and cultural settings crucial areas of focus to facilitate the principal research question to explore overseas doctoral students' identity evolution.

Internationally, there is a growing literature in doctoral experience. Increasingly, the literature within the field of doctoral experience studies has focused on doctoral students' identity issues. Within this growing body literature, there are also an increasing number of studies exploring the experiences of overseas students. Interestingly, some of these studies suggest that overseas students have a distinct experience from national students. I aimed to distinguish between what I found to be particular to overseas students as compared to observations that I found to be applicable to all doctoral students. This section helped to provide the context for such an exploration including issues of Ph.D. phases, student-Ph.D. relationship, additional requirements and work during the Ph.D. process, supervisor matters, and identity presentation, shifts, and management that were related to general doctoral students' learning and living experiences. It seemed that writing concerns, socio-economic factors that involved home country situations, friendship sought in a different context, socio-cultural adjustment, and cultural and national identities were more connected to the doctoral students with overseas status.

The literature review explored the broader political, social and economic landscape of the home countries that contextualised the individual trajectories and played an important role in investigating and understanding the progress and the

identity evolution of the students through their doctoral work. The following chapter describes in detail the methodology employed in order to answer my principal research question and explore areas of focus involving personal, academic, social, and cultural aspects of overseas doctoral students' lived experiences.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Internationally, there is a growing literature in doctoral experience. Increasingly, the literature within the field of doctoral experience studies has focused on doctoral students' identity issues. Within this growing body literature, there are also an increasing number of studies exploring the experiences of overseas students. Interestingly, some of these studies suggest that overseas students have a distinct experience from national students, while some argue that there may not be significant differences. These disparate results underscore the need for an insightful exploration of the experience of overseas students, and I have chosen to do so from a perspective of identity evolution, as such development is integral to doctoral experience. This study is distinct from many others in using a longitudinal approach rather than the common one-point-in-time data collection method. To explore deeper manifestations of the different features of overseas doctoral students, I have chosen to focus on individual narratives to capture the variation in experiences that can be lost in more categorical studies. The longitudinal approach and the direct use of individual narratives have been designed to answer my main research question, which concerns the implications of studying abroad for the identity evolution of overseas doctoral students.

In this chapter, I describe and justify the design of study, conduct of data collection, and analysis and interpretation of data. First, I describe ontology and epistemology to demonstrate the nature of this research conduct. Second, I describe the research design utilising a longitudinal approach and justify a close participant-researcher relationship to enhance this research. Third, I introduce participants and their individual variances in nationality, disciplines, educational foci, home country situations, and personal situations. Next, I describe areas of focus for enquiry and data analysis, which are facilitated by literature reviewed in the previous chapter and the main analysis material. This is followed by a justification of the rigourous conduct. After that, ethical issues concerning this research that

grows from intimate participant-researcher relationships and personal and private narratives justify this longitudinal narrative enquiry as ethical.

3.1. Ontology and Epistemology

Based on my intentions of what I wanted to accomplish with this study, ontological and epistemological assumptions best explain how knowledge and reality is assumed and how such knowledge and reality is obtained.

I explored my participants' learning and living experiences and how such experiences had influenced their identities. Such exploration was conducted to value the subjective, unique and situational contexts of the study participants (Coe, 2012). I grounded the paradigm of this research on a strong belief that viewed social phenomena as constructed socially by subjective understandings and meanings. Also, I considered that the way social reality was constructed varied depending on contexts. This suggested that the understandings of the world vary and contexts contribute to idiosyncratic ways of seeing the world (Silverman, 2006). I therefore celebrated plurality, subjectivity and personal experiences. My participants were characterized by a myriad of attributes including differences in discipline, culture, language, Ph.D. phase, nationality, age, and life experiences. These backgrounds made each one of them specific and unique, and became lenses applied to construct new meanings in the different contexts. As such, I have framed my research as following a constructivist ontology.

It was the case that the participants' perceptions of their reality developed through an on-going process of and evolved with their interaction with the bigger worlds. Given that I would not have direct access to learn and know their realities, such knowledge was informed by "indirect indications of phenomena" and "developed through a process of interpretation" of the participants' "accounts and observations of the world" (Waring, 2012, p. 16). Namely, it was by talking with the participants and actively listening to their stories that I got to understand what they

thought, how they understood the world, and how their meanings were derived. Crotty (1998, p. 95) asserts that "lived experience is incarnate in language, literature, behaviour, art, religion, law—in short, in their every cultural institution and structure". My research is consistent in that the experiences participants encountered, interpreted and made sense of were the focus. Conducting a longitudinal enquiry by giving voices to the participants allowed the readers to learn about what they had gone through and how they had understood idiographic phenomena. This way of approaching knowledge defines the epistemological stance of this research as interpretivist.

By crossing boundaries, being immersed as whole persons, and engaging with the environment and others in a cross-cultural context, the participants' everyday lives developed and transformed into hybrid forms resulting in a sense of emancipation (Denzin, 2001). To understand their stories of conflicts and liberating selves, I needed to learn their feelings and attitudes about everyday living from their perspectives. Gaining access to the participants' subjective viewpoints, focusing on their process and change over time, and doing so with an appreciation of their transitional process informed the development of my research methodology.

3.2. Research Design

The intimate subject and nature of this project shaped the research design. To explore my topic, a methodological approach of the longitudinal narrative enquiry was utilised with in-depth interviews functioning as the data collection method. The use of in-depth interviews to collect data meant that establishing a successful rapport with the study participants was critical. To do so, I established close and trusting participant-researcher relationships with the study participants and made the best of my 'insider position' to enhance and maintain those relationships. This section justifies the research design and the research conduct.

3.2.1. A Longitudinal Approach

Learning and living experiences concerning time, space, support systems, and supervisor's roles, to name a few, contribute to overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. A longitudinal approach met the needs of my study that sought to trace significant events in the target student group's lives and determine how these events influence these students' identities. My participants were required to be involved in my research for one year. Considering that it takes an average of four or five years to acquire a doctorate in UK universities, one-year involvement with my research was an appropriate feature of the study's research design. Given that I had a limited period of time to collect data and complete my research this longitudinal approach focused on tracking identity evolution within one year of the participants' doctoral journey.

Unlike cross-sectional studies where different individuals are studied based on a one-snap-shot response, longitudinal studies track a set group of people to follow over a lengthy period of time during which continuous or repeated inquires take place. Vignoles (2012) asserts that longitudinal data also benefit research that aims to address causal issues. This approach uncovers specific sequences and storylines in each participant's doctoral journey thereby establishing trajectories of significant events. Moreover, longitudinal data have the advantage of showing similarities and differences prior to and after a certain point in time. As such, progression and/or regression, as well as the impact of certain events, can be determined. Using this method, change of time, process, and causal relationships can be explored and established, as a longitudinal style provides access to retrospective, introspective and prospective point of views. This way, broader contexts "within which change takes place" and "the full set of factors that participants perceive as contributing to change or outcome" can be properly addressed, discussed and understood (Lewis, 2003, p. 54). As a result, the longitudinal was effective in tracing the participants' identity evolution.

In attempting to settle upon the longitudinal approach to conduct my research, I began by establishing the perimeter of the methodology of this study.

Originally, I did not intend to focus on the outcome of subjects studying abroad for a lengthy period of time at the doctoral education level. Rather, I aimed to explore their change over time and across space. I followed the participants, evolved with them, and traced their mundane and daily experiences comprising their doctoral trajectories that influenced their identities. In practical terms, my work consisted of describing the contexts where their narratives emerged so as to make sense of their transformed identities. Further, the quantitative data gathering method that asked structured, fixed, and close-ended questions did not easily reveal the subjects' transformations. Nor did such transformations emerge as a result of comparisons and contrasts between two cultural groups. As previously indicated, the participants' narratives were not obtained in one-off interviews, nor were they obtained through a third party. Instead, the participants focus their narratives on their learning and living experiences in four different timings individually. How they feel about these experiences, impacts of such experiences on their beings and identities, and processes of transformation are tracked.

Setting out to focus on process and change over time and across space my research goal necessitated the use of a longitudinal approach in order to recount meaningful events and changes experienced by the participants (Elliott, 2005). A longitudinal approach allowed my study to trace change; however, to learn the extent to which such changes could have an impact upon overseas doctoral students' identities, I considered listening and talking with them to be the most appropriate means for me to learn from and know about my participants.

3.2.2. A Narrative Enquiry

Elliott (2005, p. 3) argues that "a narrative can be understood to organise a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole". Such a sequence makes clear that trajectories are formed over time. Sequence, in this sense, demonstrates how

certain events occur in the first place, why they are so meaningful to the participants, and functions as a frame to understand stories and narrative accounts.

Bell (2010, p. 20) asserts that a story's power "is dependent on the storyteller's use of language to present an interpretation of personal experience". This is to emphasise that narrative is a process of making senses. During data collection, interpretation and writing, such a sense-making process is highlighted by the use of expression skills and the exploration of the experiences involved by both the storyteller and the listener. In the case of my research, the participant and I were both active explorers. As personal accounts of lived experiences were my focus, narratives collected in a longitudinal fashion permitted the expression of multiple voices, from the participants, me, and our different cultural positions and contexts. The multiple perspectives allowed me to develop structures and linkages in the light of my experiences combined with the storyteller's interpretation (ibid.).

Elliott (2005, p. 4) suggests that the features of narratives can be "*chronological*", "*meaningful*", and "*social*". Firstly, narratives are revealed in sequences and order. This means trajectories are traced and plots are formed. Also, sequences of events consistent of a beginning, middle, and end (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010). As such, linkages and storylines of events are established. Secondly, narratives reveal meanings concerning the events and the narrator. It is a vehicle for an individual to express in what way and to what extent certain experiences are significant to them (Elliott, 2005; Riessman, 2002). Furthermore, as narrating is also a sense-making process, my participants narrated and constructed meanings and explanations of experiences that were important to them. Thus, they were not passive interviewees merely providing answers to questions. Rather, they were 'active' participants who thought critically about events, sometimes troubling ones, in order to convey the reasons, explanations and justifications for such events. Thirdly, narrative is based on the "interrelation between individual lives and social contexts" (Elliott, 2005, p. 4). Narrating gives individuals opportunities to examine and reflect on socially constructed experiences and what those experiences mean to them. It reflects an internal-external dialectic that can influence identity construction. Daiute and Lightfoot

(2004, p. xii) elaborate by considering narration, as well as individual development, "a social process" where contextual elements intersect to influence identity and development. The developmental feature of narrating is, therefore, revealed in the sequence embedded in the narratives where past, present and future is meaningfully connected (Goodson, Biesta, Tedder and Adair, 2010). Narrating and narratives, in this way, helped me to explore identity from a developmental perspective. Daiute and Lightfoot (2004, p. xii) assert that narrative analysis foregrounds and organises "relations between self and society". Such social elements concern contexts of the producer and the audience(s) of the narratives (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010). In this sense, subjective perspectives from both the participants and the researcher influenced data analysis.

I was interested in overseas doctoral students' stories derived from their lives. Their narratives provided a well-rounded foundation for me to advance my understanding of individual participant's development within contexts where social, cultural, spatial and historical elements had played an important role to influence the narratives. The narrative study allowed me to explore each participant's life with a holistic view. In my study, it was the in-depth interview that allowed me and each participant to sit and talk having sufficient time for reflection and evaluation. The nature of the in-depth interviews allowed the participant and researcher to learn about each other, the contexts in which our narratives were grounded, and, in turn, the self that emerged. More than a one-sided investigation, the process functioned more as cooperative work wherein both parties could conduct our interviews. Life, narratives, and learning were hence connected to co-construct this hybrid journey.

As was the case with participants in my research, all overseas doctoral students make sense of and acquire knowledge in idiosyncratic ways, and, thus, contribute to a culture that is distinctive to the members of a particular community (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Of course, each student in my study also brought different social and cultural capitals with them to the new environment. Using a longitudinal narrative research approach helped me gain and construct insightful, rich and dynamic understandings of overseas doctoral students' lived experiences

that contribute to identity evolution. Producing narratives encouraged my participants to find meanings to and make sense of their past and present doings while storylines were formed to help me learn how the each journey had taken to the present. They also pointed out why and how their future might be planned. Narratives were fragments of temporal moments indicating the dynamic nature of the participants over time and across space. Overseas status created a specific site where overseas students' diverse cultures were added to this local space. In other words, global features emanated from its locality. This way, the participants were carriers of multiple sites and they brought multiple sites into this community via the study. The next section introduces the main design of my study.

3.2.3. The Study Design: In-depth Interview

This section is about the design of my main study: the in-depth interview. I provide rationale for using in-depth interviews, justify the interview focus, and describe the conducting of the interview.

3.2.3.1. Rationale for Using In-depth Interviews

> *What we do, see, think, believe and hope for is distinctive to us, and until we share that perspective with others it remains within our own personal membrane of knowing. An in-depth interview provides a way for a researcher to cross this boundary, to journey into another's perspective about a circumstance or event, so meaning can be learned and significance shared. In this way, in-depth interviews offer a path to discovery and greater understanding (Mears, 2012, p. 24).*

As a member of the overseas doctoral students' community, I shared with my study members many similar concerns, especially in relation to study and personal lives. My study was based upon individual in-depth interviews with a small group of

overseas doctoral students an done question I wanted to ask was how the participants, overseas doctoral students, felt and thought about studying and living in the UK. I also asked about their daily lives, their attitudes towards interactions between self, others and the bigger environment, their opinions regarding their current living situation, as well as their feelings about home. Their perceptions of lived experiences of learning and living provided me access to a deeper understanding of their circumstances.

The key instrument of narrative studies, in-depth interviews provide a structure for exchanging and constructing knowledge and meanings (Denzin, 2001; Kvale, 2007; Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005; Mears, 2012; Silverman, 2006). To learn the depth and breadth of lived experiences and meanings of these experiences to my participants' identity evolution, substantial time devoted to having conversations that comprised the in-depth interviews with the participants was critical (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). This was because I considered the participants purveyors of rich information from whom I could uncover stories of great importance to my research goal (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010; Elliotts, 2005; Goodson et al., 2010). In addition, Mears (2012) argues that interviewing participants multiple times can help ensure in-depth reflection. Such a design can illuminate a 'change' in the life and perceptions of each participant. Therefore, I decided to employ a series of four in-depth interviews with each participant as my primary data collection method. In so doing, the longitudinal structure was able to provide rich insights instead of "simple facts" (Mears, 2012, p. 171).

Silverman (2005) reminds that as interviews are utilised to elicit interviewees' perceptions, how the interview is conducted is key to meaning co-construction and proper exploration of experiences. The in-depth interview provides principles to ensure that important issues of the participant's life are addressed. Kvale (2007, p. 2) argues that it is advantageous if the interviewer can be more involved as opposed to creating an "in a power position" where interviewer asks questions for the interviewee to answer. Specifically, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions and probe by using "counter-questions" (ibid.) to test the interviewee's level of belief and "attitudes and feelings towards the situation" (ibid., p. 3). In so doing, in-depth interviews become an active site of learning, as new

realisations surfaced to provide linkages and meanings to events (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Rather than stand outside the line of interview questions, the interviewer needs to prepare to open and be personally and emotionally involved. In so doing, the line between the researcher and the researched hence becomes blurred and the respective previously separate spaces are penetrated.

In-depth interviewing principles indeed fostered a creative environment for both my participants and I to co-construct meanings of the narrative accounts and experiences. The disadvantages though, in the case of my research, lied in the few moments when our opinions, attitudes, and feelings were offensive, questioned, and misunderstood. Fortunately, mutual trust and constant reflection provided space and time for us to think over our remarks. In addition, even though my participants articulated feeling safe and relaxed enough to share their very personal experiences with me, I was not very certain in the beginning as to how my participants would think about my personal and emotional involvement and disclosure. Would they consider it inappropriate? Would they withdraw because they were not interested in my experiences? In the course of the interviews, the "mutual disclosure" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 12), rather than scaring my participants away, kept the participants involved and became a prominent features of my study. Overall, I contend that the "multiple disclosure" (ibid.) enhanced and maintained the strength of the participant-researcher relationship.

Utilising the in-depth interview highlighted the personal and emotional involvement of both the participant and myself. Every interview was unique in that each one was an outcome of my relationship with the participant concerned. My research aims at learning about the participants' sense making process in relation to various subjective experiences. In-depth interviews allowed me to gain access to their experiences as well as their narrative constructions. Our 'mutual disclosure' enhanced and expanded, rather than constrained, the horizons of narratives and meanings.

3.2.3.2. The Interview Content and Focus

Each participant was invited to have four sessions of in-depth interview. Literature reviewed in the previous chapter pointed out areas of focus for the interview. Each interview endeavoured to explore the participant's academic life, personal life, social life, and different cultural expectations. Depending upon the progress of interviews and each participant's individual situations, there was change and shifts over time in interview questions and interview foci. This phenomenon is expounding upon in this section.

The interview guide

Literature reviewed in identity, third space, and doctoral students' learning and living experiences shed light on what ways and to what extent being overseas influences doctoral students' identity evolution. The signposts of overseas doctoral students' lives were sought from, but not limited to, the following experiences in the course of the interviews:

1. Disciplinary experiences: encounters that illustrated characteristics of the respective disciplines; for example, help from the department, faculty members, staff, resources;
2. Life-changing events: events that demonstrated great significance to individual identity; for example, marital status, intimate relationship, family affairs;
3. Support systems: networks in relation to study and personal life, for instance, fellow colleagues, other overseas students, co-nationals, supervisors, faculty members, department, friend, host country nationals, family members;
4. Personal growth and development: being matured, independent, being calm; forming critical views;
5. Time construct: Ph.D. phases, prior experiences, expectations about future;
6. Supervisory experiences: roles of supervisors, expectations of supervisors, change of supervisor, student-supervisor relationship and interaction, availability of supervision,

7. Academic issues: attitudes towards study, progress, autonomy, authority, reading and writing;

8. Financial issues: funding, self-finance, needs of financial aid, obligation relating to financial aid;

9. Space construct: interaction with places, cross-cultural context, concept of home; and,

10. Epistemological experiences: methodology, ways to acquire knowledge.

The literature, together with the signpost experiences, informed four areas of focus—personal, academic, social, and cultural aspects—to help me address the principal research question in the process of my exploration of overseas doctoral students' lives.

A prelude

Prior to every participant's first interview, there was an introductory meeting conducted in a face-to-face manner. The meeting lasted for about 90 minutes and was conducted in a relaxed environment chosen by the participant. Although each participant had already received an email attached with a letter of invitation describing my research objective and methods, the purpose of the introductory meeting was to describe my research nature and explain in detail what it entailed to be a participant of my study. The meeting was a critical step for both the participant and me, as it allowed the participant to voice their questions and understand what would be involved. On the other hand, it was important for me to have a basic understanding of the participant, and his or her background in relation to the past experiences and present situations.

First interview

After asking the participant to introduce himself, I asked about prior experiences concerning education, profession, and positive and negative intercultural

interaction experiences; motivation to pursue doctorate in the UK; family members and home country situations; doctoral education experiences to date, including views about supervision, learning environment, fellow colleagues, support from the department, and networks in study; financial and funding situation; cultural differences and impact; socialisation and relationships; and, food, events and celebrations in the light of cultural background. In most cases, the first interview went well except for some moments when I overemphasised the differences between cultures. I was focused so on exploring the participant's perceptions from an intercultural interaction perspective that I overlooked the fact that interactions did not need to be cross-cultural only. When language was not a constraint, very often the interaction was at an interpersonal level. It was not until some participants who questioned my inquiry focus that I realized my bias in the interview questions and the mistake in the research direction. Nevertheless, I continued utilising these questions to explore, for the sake of being fair in my exploration in every participant's first interview session. In so doing, I learned of the participants' opinions and feelings about intercultural interaction experiences, information valuable to my study.

Second interview

During the second interview each participant talked about events related to what they deemed important. Some shared anxiety regarding their supervisor's feedback and relationship while others recounted joy concerning what they perceived to be a positive progression of their thesis, or excitement about upcoming plans to visit home. Based on what I learned about each participant in the first interview session, I focused on specific events that indicated the need for follow up or further investigation in the second interview. My goal for the second interview was to establish storylines for each participant. For instance, if the participant mentioned that she was very excited due to a plan to visit home in the previous interview, I asked about the trip home. I explored how the gathering with family and friends back home went. I also asked about the political, residential, and romantic, for instance, situations in the home country. Other common topics

included a debriefing of completed and upcoming supervisor meetings, spouses and other romantic involvements, thesis writing progress, and confidence levels. At this phase, in-depth reflections about the self, others, and the environment became very apparent. We began to spend more time discussing specific and meaningful events that mattered to individual participant. A trajectory began to form to link past and present as experiences that we explored through the "forward" and "backward" and "inward" and "outward" perspectives (Hue, 2008, p. 232). This way, I learned how the participant felt about certain experiences and how such experiences connected past and present to shape their future (Dwyer, 2004; Hue, 2008; McAlpine, 2012b). Unlike the first interview where the participants were involved in more common questions about self and their background, at the point of second interview, the participants embarked on a journey to delve into self. Some of the questions explored included -- Why was the decision made this way? Why did this matter to you so much? Why do you think you changed the way you were? Why did you feel this way about this? The journey of self-discovery surprised every participant. My interview questions became more simple but also more direct and inquisitive.

Third interview

For the third interview, storylines were established for each participant based on the previous two interview sessions. Each one was also very clear about why specific events permeated in the interview. Each participant was clear about why specific events from the second interview were being explored in the third interview and both the participant and I followed the storylines to explore the development of each event. Some of the follow-up questions included whether or not the supervisor contacted and provided the very needed feedback, what had been done to cope with marital conflicts, the need of arguing for the home country political situation, needing to suspend doctoral research in order to conduct research for a temporary position, and the reaction to a reduction in free and social time were the examples of storylines that emerged in the participants' doctoral trajectories. The participants were very used to interview format and structure by the third interview

allowing my interview questions to be even more simple and direct. For instance, focusing on study and related matters, I simply asked, "How's study?" "How's the meeting with supervisor?" During the third interview, participants felt much more comfortable discussing such events and were also more open to reflection and exploration in an effort to understand for themselves the significance of these events.

Fourth interview

When I approached each participant to arrange the fourth interview, I signalled clearly that the fourth interview would be the last in-depth interview session for my research study. During the last sessions the participants and I talked about and discussed previously identified significant events and reviewed the storylines. Moreover, we recalled the interview journey. I asked the participants to share their feelings about having been given the opportunity to talk about the doctoral education experience, being a part of a longitudinal narrative study utilising in-depth interviews, and learning of my personal and academic events I experienced during my doctoral journey. We reflected on the deep personal and emotional involvement of the journey we, as researcher and participant, had taken together. We also looked back to explore the participants' change of perspectives and the changed sense of self. There was a wide range of emotions experienced by the participant during the final interview including joy, weariness, excitement, amazement and curiosity, as we talked about our expectations in the imagined future. Some felt worried while others felt confident. Some viewed career opportunities as being limited due to economic situations while others felt their doctoral education had opened a door to more opportunities. For most participants, the final interview was an opportunity to reflect on the self, the participants' emerging identity, presently and in the imagined future.

The first official interview commenced in early July 2011 and the very last one was completed in early September 2012. Each participant took part in four individual in-depth interviews. The interview focus flowed in an hourglass style. The

first interview session sought to acquire background information about individual participant. Such background information was sought via retrospective and introspective perspectives. However, it depended upon the participant's free will as to what to articulate. Some talked about problems in student-supervisor relationships while others centred on their sense of progress in completing their thesis. With each interview each participant established trajectories and storylines to develop in the next interview. In this sense, the second interview marked the shift from the top and broad part to the specific and narrow part of the hourglass. The second interview session was also when each participant's storylines underwent development. The creation of storylines prompted further probing and in-depth understanding. This was presented in the bottom and broad part of the hourglass.

3.2.3.3. Conducting the Interview

This section describes the actual conduct of the in-depth interview including strategies to recruit participants, the process used to conduct the interviews, and a reflection of the interview process.

Strategies to Recruit Participants

Recruiting strategies in this research concerned the recruiting frame, methods and size. The purposes included recognizing potential individuals who could offer information with breadth and depth as well as coming up with organized steps to approach and recruit them (Kvale, 2007; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Punch, 1998; Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). The formation of a recruiting framework defined individuals and themes that could help me achieve my research goal (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

In my study, individuals enrolled in a doctoral programme as fulltime students and were recognized as foreign in terms of nationality by the university were considered as qualifying the recruitment framework. The strategy was to define suitable recruiting methods (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). It was very convenient for me to recruit participants from those whom I knew because I was also a member of the overseas doctoral students community. In fact, some of my colleagues volunteered to participate in my research. This initial group was considered a convenience sampling (Punch, 1998). I then encouraged this group to assist in my efforts to use social media to help recruit additional participants (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Meanwhile, I posted an on-line advertisement on the university student website to recruit volunteers. I hoped that combining different recruiting methods: convenience, snowballing and seeking volunteers would secure a group of students with diverse backgrounds (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The small number of participants involved meant that my study would be small in scale; however, the small scale suited my desire to investigate overseas doctoral students' lived experiences in an intimate fashion through the use of personal and emotional engagement between myself and the participants. My recruitment period lasted from April to early November 2011. By that time, 9 overseas doctoral students had agreed to grant me access to follow them for a year and listen to their stories. The small number of participants, in addition to facilitating my desire to engage in a small scale and in-depth exploration process was also helpful given the time constraints I faced needing to complete my data collection within a one year period.

To begin my work with my study participants, I prepared a letter of informed consent with detailed descriptions as to what my research goal and methods were. I also described what was expected of them as a participant in my research. When an overseas doctoral student expressed an interest in my research, I would respond with a brief inquiry to engage the possibility of their participation and to inform them that an introductory meeting would be arranged for the two of us to discuss and learn more about each other. If the response was positive, I then emailed the individual the letter of informed consent that also functioned as an official letter of invitation to participate. 12 potential participants showed interests

and received my invitation. 9 replied and agreed to meet. At the meeting, I explained in great detail what inspired my study. I described my research goal and provided examples of experiences that would help me explore elements of identity evolution. My examples helped clarify issues and concerns of these potential participants. They showed that they understood fully the ways and the extent to which their personal lives and views would be involved if they decided to participate. After the meetings, all 9 potential participants continued to express interest and decided to become official participants. As the focus of my research evolved, the data I collected from one recruit became non-responsive given that she and I participated in the in-depth interviews after she was awarded her doctorate. Her recounts became remotely relative when my research was about change during the doctoral process. I explained to her my decision to leave out her responses from my report and she showed great understanding even though I had take up her time.

Thus, in the end, eight overseas doctoral students were successfully recruited and interviewed, and their narratives analysed, interpreted, and reported.

Process of Conducting the In-depth Interview

8 overseas doctoral students of 7 nationalities became my main study participants. Each one of them and I met officially for the main study to conduct a series of four interviews spaced about three months apart. Our common language was English. Therefore, our in-depth interviews were conducted utilising English.

The three months gap between interviews was based upon the seasonal concept. Also, participants remarked that their supervisory meeting with their supervisors often took place once a month. Three months between interviews would allow time and space for them to reflect on what happened in the supervisory meeting, understand their reactions and perceptions towards the meeting, and implement any changes proposed by their supervisor. Moreover, major holidays, such as summer vacation, Easter, Chinese New Year, and winter

vacation provided doctoral students opportunities to take a break. Overseas doctoral students from different backgrounds celebrated these holidays by visiting home or gathering with friends locally. Three months, in this sense, provided my participants time and space to go celebrate such occasions and events and incorporate them into their study and personal plans. They were able to reflect on these experiences and plan for the near future. In so doing, a change over time was noted.

The interactive and creative fashion of each interview session allowed the participants and I to discuss matters just like having ordinary conversations (Denzin, 2001; Kvale, 2007). The difference lay in that it was a guided conversation that was flexible and, at the same time, organized. Therefore, our interviews were treated as deep and meaningful conversations between two good friends and they were strengthened by the trusting relationships and friendships established between us. I managed to learn from the participants' narratives details about their rite of passage. As such, I was able to contextualize the participants by providing detailed and holistic descriptions concerning who and what they have become. I set out not to be an expert. Rather, I was there as a learner with the explicit purposes to learn from the participants whom I considered to be experts of their communities, lives and cultures. Moreover, I considered them storytellers who interpreted and constructed their realities through storytelling in order for me to learn from their lived experiences (Atkinson, 2002).

Based on the interpretive nature of the qualitative interviewing, I probed the participants to talk more, be specific, explain and clarify. This study employed six types of probes suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 150): "elaboration" that enquired more detail; "continuation" that invited more talking; "clarification" that sought verification; "attention" that showed concentration on listening and understanding; "completion" that encouraged ending a thought and, "evidence" that attempted to identify the participant's certainty over interpretations. The probing required active listening, sensitivity and understanding. It facilitated the construction of narratives. It was enhanced by a good rapport and trusting relationships established between the participants and myself. In this sense, the

interviews revealed participants whose journeys of self-discovery and self-awareness involved thoughts and feelings that ranged from ambivalence to liberation leading to the construction of distinctive hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1999; Kvale, 2007; Kim, 2008).

A Reflection of the Interview Conduct

It took one year to complete one participant's interviews. Multiple in-depth interviews provided gateways to identify significant evens and storylines that contributed to the changes experienced in the individual participant's life and identity. Personal situations, access, my involvement, and the impact of the interviews on me had an effect on how the interviews were conducted.

Each participant experienced unique personal situations in their Ph.D. journey and my study and research grew and evolved with each. For instance, one participant revealed that she had to stop watching TV completely even though it was an important way to relax her mind. It was because she became very angry with the news coverage about the unrest in her country. She also pointed out that she had to isolate herself and stayed away from people, as she was too often asked about her family and friends back home. To focus on writing, she basically lived a life without entertainment and contact with local friends for half a year. This affected our interviews. The intervals between interviews went beyond three months. To understand her concerns, I watched TV news and sought out information from her co-nationals to learn about the situation in her country. To ensure her wellbeing, I changed out interview dates to suit her requirements. Due to each participant's stories and personal situations, interview dates and questions often required adjustment and change. Despite such challenges, I was able to refocus in order to maintain continuity and elicit and generate follow-up questions.

My 'insider' position attracted a network of volunteers who became participants in my research, which made gaining, facilitating and maintaining access an easier task. However, this research was designed utilising a longitudinal

method. This meant access needed to be continual and maintaining such continuity required maintenance. Levinson (2005) emphasizes that access can be enhanced by different forms of facilitation. Trust, friendship, close relationships, and the fellowship between overseas doctoral student' were the forms that facilitated the maintenance of access. Rather than being considered as a blanket concept, access becomes an ongoing issue that needs to be established and maintained throughout the research study (Levinson, 2010). This way, levels of access were key to completing the in-depth interviews designed for my study.

Moreover, the particulars of my involvement as the researcher also functioned as a means to facilitate access (Wolcott, 1999). My self-disclosure of thoughts and feelings was a significant factor (Gray, 2003). On the one hand, I employed this approach "to merit an open response" (Kvale, 2007, p. 9). My decision to self-disclose was made to produce a "level playing field" between my participants and me (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 72). It was a give-and-receive condition that manifested fairness in our verbal exchanges (Denzin, 2001; Liamputtong, 2007; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Dunbar and colleagues (2002) assert that the researcher's self-disclosure is imperative to achieving a successful interview because "it tells the interviewees where the researcher is coming from" (p. 291, cited in Liamputtong, 2007, p. 73). By building "a climate for mutual disclosure", my participants were ensured that they could also reveal their thoughts and feelings with comfort (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 12). On the other hand, as the researcher, I needed to know when to keep my lips tight to avoid interruption (Liamputtong, 2007). I also needed to be mindful to maintain my silence when the discussion involved political topics wherein my involvement would invite complication.

The contingent issue that emerged from my involvement in the interview process was the impact my participation had my own doctoral journey. The interview sessions with some participants saw me witness and probe their deepest thoughts and feelings. In so doing, I noticed that I also experienced a great sense of helplessness, sadness and frustration when participants struggled with issues concerning marriage, supervision and home country unrest. In addition to

facilitating data collection, the interviewing sessions were significant emotional experiences for me. I cried with participants and argued with them as well. I also worried and still am worrying about some of them anxiously awaiting emails to let me know if they are fine. My involvement required me to pay careful attention to my own wellbeing and the extent to which my involvement fostered or hindered my interpretation and analysis (Atkinson, 2002; Heyl, 2001; Lewis, 2003). I needed to constantly remind myself of the researcher's role so that instead of being impedimental, our friendship and close relationships would provide impetus to the study.

Utilizing the in-depth interview has highlighted the personal and emotional involvement of both parties: participant and myself. Every interview was unique in that each was a product of my relationship with the participant.

3.2.4. A Close Relationship with Each Participant

The development of close relationships was important for me to not only gain but also maintain trust and rapport with the participants, as my research required the participants to share with me very personal experiences and perceptions. I recognised that my 'insider' position and rapport with the participants helped shaped the research design and contributed greatly to data collection, interpretation, and analysis.

3.2.4.1. My 'Insider' Position

As a member of the overseas doctoral students community, I have certainly, for my own doctoral education, been immersed in this field of study for a significant length of time. I have observed, noticed, and even to a certain level, experienced issues

resonating with those discussed in the literature reviewed. I knew very well what my participants were going through. Or, at least, I thought I knew.

To the participants, I surely spoke the language literally and metaphorically. In this sense, this longitudinal narrative study also had qualities of a "'new' ethnography" highlighting natural empathy, mutual understanding with participants (Back, 1996; Gray, 2003; Probyn, 1993), as well as "participation" and the bringing of "the self into the process of learning" (Roberts, 2003, p. 123). Some participants expressed that my 'insider' position and 'in-the-same-boat' situation made them feel understood. Compared to their friends who were not involved in doctoral education, I shared with my participants challenges encountered in study and life. Moreover, compared to their friends who were also doctoral students, my participants had this unique opportunity to talk about themselves with me – someone who listened wholeheartedly. We therefore formed a bond that was framed by our belonging to the community of doctoral students developing abroad. This close interaction was based upon an interpersonal, rather than intercultural or international engagement. We certainly recognised each other as being in the same boat. We formed a new community identity in which our lives and outlooks were developed overseas while pursuing doctoral degrees and were given the opportunity to voice our thoughts and feelings about the doctoral journeys in a study.

It was less difficult for me as an 'insider' than it might have been for an 'outsider' to gain access to the target group, ensure rapport from the outset throughout, understand what has been said, and maintain access (Levinson, 2005; Levinson, 2010). None of my participants withdrew from the study even some experienced life-changing events that affected their being greatly in addition to the requirement that they participate for a period of one year or more. The breadth and the depth of exploration could have been hindered or biased because of a belief that I thought I knew it all, took notions for granted or formed mistaken resonance without knowing (Flick, 2009; Gray, 2003; Silverman, 2005; Wolcott, 1999). It was important for me to be open minded, flexible and to engage in constant reflection on the issues raised by my participants in order to restrict personal bias and

prevent my taken-for-granted perception from being evoked (Back, 1996; Ezzy, 2002; Punch, 1998).

My 'insider' position gained me the trust of my participants and allowed me access to sometimes the most personal and intimate narratives in my participants' lives. I managed to gain insightful, rich, and in-depth understandings of my participants, as well established friendship and close relationships.

3.2.4.2. Rapport in the Participant-Researcher Relationship

Rapport was identified as an important element of my study, and was demonstrated in the friendship and close relationships that I earned and built with each single participant.

Personally centred experiences are not easy to unearth (Liamputtong, 2007). In fact, even though the sharing of the experiences was granted, the commitment to being part of a yearlong dialogue to reflect on life in order to document an evolving identity journey was not promising from the outset. It required established rapport between the participants and me from the very beginning and throughout. Ultimately, all the participants submitted to all required interviews, shared insightful information, and established trust with me in the process of establishing friendships. Certainly, there could have been various reasons for participants to quit the study, or become passive and reluctant to share information. They could have dropped out of the research simply because they reserved the right to withdraw at anytime with no questions asked. Also, they could have provided superficial information just to fulfil their commitment with minimal effort. On the other hand, had participants dropped out of the study due to my display of insensitivity, inappropriate knowledge or bias it would have been my fault (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Kvale, 2007; Legard *et al.*, 2003; Silverman, 2006). Instead, I believe I displayed the sensibility and flexibility that is required for effective probing, pacing of the interviews, phrasing of questions, and proper scheduling of interviews (Liamputtong & Ezzy,

2005; Legard *et al.*, 2003). The trust I engendered was reflected in the willingness of participants to be open about their feelings and insecurities, and also to share details of intimate, personal matters including marital discord and dissolution.

Tillmann-Healy (2006), from an ethnographic perspective, suggests friendship is one way to show rapport and argues that friendship and fieldwork are similar in ways that both require permission to entry and effort to maintain. Tillmann-Healy (2006, p. 278) points out that friendship is established and maintained in the light of "conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, giving and vulnerability". These were the features of the participant-researcher relationship of my research. Nevertheless, friendship was not a prerequisite for partaking in my research and rich narratives. In my study, I knew some participants long before my research goal was defined. The other participants and I developed trusting relationships as our interviews evolved, and gradually friendships were formed. Again, it is important to note that, of course, friendship is not necessary in, for instance, a qualitative research utilising interviews as the data collection method. Rapport, on the other hand, is key.

Tillmann-Healy (2006) warns that research seeking to explore narrative data based on friendship as method leads the researcher to shift between roles of a friend and a researcher. It is inevitable that the researcher is personally involved and therefore requires time and space to reduce emotional load and distress (Liamputtong, 2007). My deep personal and emotional connection to the community under study made me "a vulnerable observer, a compassionate witness, and a true companion" (Tillmann-Healy, 2006, p. 278). I indeed felt fear and worry, in addition to happiness and excitement during the course of my involvement with participants. During interviews, data analysis, and time spent reporting my findings, my roles vacillated between researcher and friend. When taking on the role researcher, I was able to respond with critical analyses, but there were times my role of friend became pervasive, disturbing interviews, the data analyses process, and the reporting of findings. As a consequence, whenever possible, I worked to make my role as researcher central and the role of friend on the periphery. Occasionally it was necessary to make the role of friend take centre stage and

marginalise the role of researcher. Despite the fact that uncertainty as to which role should be central became an issue at some points, I was able to successfully shift from studying 'them' as an outsider to studying 'us' as an insider. Friendship, in the case of my research, was a strong element of rapport resulting in a close participant-researcher relationship.

The rapport between participant and researcher appeared to have profound effects on some participants making them feel emotionally connected with the researcher/friend, and the research (Tillmann-Healy, 2006). My participants always asked how I was and enquired as to the progress of my study. They also provided some suggestions as to how to keep myself healthy, both psychologically and physically, in order to face the pressure of the work. Moreover, they considered our interviews rare opportunities for their stories to be told, heard, and learned (Hutchinson, Wilson and Wilson, 1994). Several participants commented that they realised that having time, space, and a person dedicated to listening to their own stories made them feel unique. Some of them even described the opportunity therapy sessions wherein they did not need to feel guilty or selfish while still focusing on the self. Ethical issues are, of course, salient when 'friendship' apparently problematises data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting and will be addressed in the section focused on ethical issues involved in my research study.

The section of 3.2. addressed the research design. In it I justified the use of specific methods. The longitudinal approach ensured time and space for insightful reflection and understandings of each participant's trajectory. Narrative enquiry focused the research on how the participants made sense of the lived experiences. In-depth interviews probed the participants' experiences, their attitudes and feelings. My 'insider' position, close relationships with the participants, and established trust between the participants and me helped me gain and maintain access to their experiences.

3.3. Participants

Eight overseas doctoral students talked about their experiences in learning and living in order for me to explore the implications of studying abroad for their identity evolution. We addressed significant events that were considered important to their identities in relation to academic, individual, social and cultural aspects of life. Their diverse backgrounds and the willingness to share allowed this research to evolve with them. In the section that follows, the participants' diverse background and roles are introduced along with a cameo to delineate and contextualise each participant.

3.3.1. About the Participants

This section introduces the 8 participants of my main study. The diversity of my 8 participants was seen in the variety personal demographic information and academic backgrounds. Prior experiences were considered valuable while current status was also investigated. The purpose was to provide encompass a broad range of qualities to better understand and to compel insights from diverse participants. Table 1 showed personal information about the participants.

Table 1. Personal information about the participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age range	Nationality	Student Status
1. Bob	Male	Below 30	Greek	EU
2. Jiyeon	Female	Over 30	South Korean	International
3. Karl	Male	Over 30	Germany	EU
4. Scarlett	Female	Over 30	American	International
5. Denise	Female	Over 30	Armenian	International
6. Sophie	Female	Below 30	Greek Cypriot	EU
7. Mr. T	Male	Below 30	Greek	EU
8. Dora	Female	Below 30	Syrian	International

3.3.1.1. Personal Information about the Participants

The participants were comprised of five female and three male overseas doctoral students. Although gender was not considered as a construct to influence how participants thought and felt about the self, others, and environment, it is presented for readers to know more about the participants. Age, informed by the pilot study, could provide useful information as to how prior experience in profession and life, for instance, influence present decisions and future directions. Four participants were younger than 30 years of age while the other four were over 30.

3.3.1.2. Nationality

In the current study, I utilised 'overseas', rather than 'international', to describe my research target: doctoral students who were not British in terms of their nationalities. In other words, I focused on doctoral students coming from countries outside the UK. Greek, German, and South Korean doctoral students exemplified overseas doctoral students' nationalities in my study. Being foreign to the UK also means that demonstrated English ability. The university under research asked for at least a band 7, out of 9, in IELTS in order for these students to obtain admission if they came from a non-English speaking country.

The participants came from eight countries. Four of them were international students and four EU according to the university categorisation. EU participants were considered to have more shared cultural capital with the UK context according to Hofstede's (2001) study comparing countries in cultural dimensions. For instance, western countries tend to show higher levels of individualism while eastern countries show higher level of collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). Adjustment to life lived in the UK was expected to be easier for students from western countries. Also, EU participants are required to pay considerably less tuition fees compared to those categorised as international (UK Permits, 2015). Financial issues, in this

sense, should be less problematic for my EU participants compared with international ones. With regard to nationality and native language, Bob and Mr. T came from Greece and Greek was their native language. Jiyeon came from South Korea, but her first language was English. Korean was her second language. Karl came from Germany and German was his mother tongue. Scarlett came from United States, but she still found gaps between her American English and UK English. Denise came from Armenia where Armenian was spoken as the national language. However, Russian was still a common language for communication in Armenia. Sophie came from Cyprus and she was a Greek Cypriot. Sophie found differences in the Greek language spoken by Greeks and Greek Cypriots. Finally, Dora came from Syria and Arabic was her native language.

Access to various cultural and national backgrounds was crucial for my study. My intention was to delve into experiences of overseas students. Rather than focusing on a comparison between two cultural contexts, I set out to explore commonality and particularity among the participants coming from different backgrounds.

3.3.1.3. Prior Academic Achievement and Current Academic Background

My participants' study, funding situations, prior educational experiences as well as current educational background could provide information to connect their past and current learning and living experiences to the formation of their identity evolution. Table 2 displays this information. Jiyeon, Scarlett, and Sophie had two master degrees; Jiyeon and Sophie obtained both master degrees in the UK, while Scarlett received her first master degree in the United States. Bob, Dora, Mr. T and Denise each received one master's degree awarded by UK universities. Karl obtained one master degree in his home country, Germany. Such details presented two layers of implications. Postgraduate degrees at the master's level, either in the UK or the participants' home country, suggested experience with successful navigation of higher education. Such students should be familiar with

the requirements of institutions at this level. Moreover, master's degrees awarded by UK universities indicated UK experiences, which could include study in higher education, communication, and living. Students with such experiences should have less difficulty and more ability to navigate approaches to studying, socialising, and living in the UK.

Table 2. Academic background information about the participants

Names	Department	Funding	Master(s)	Ph.D.
1. Bob	Accounting, The Business School	Full scholarship provided by the university under study	UK	2011-2015
2. Jiyeon	Graduate School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Studies	Full scholarship provided by the university under study	1. UK 2. UK	2010-2015
3. Karl	Fluid Engineering, College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences	Full scholarship provided by the university under study	Germany	2009-2014
4. Scarlett	Graduate School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Studies	Self-funded by student loan at a private bank in United States	USA UK	2010-present
5. Denise	Politics, College of Social Sciences and International Studies	Self-funded and partially funded	UK	2009-present
6. Sophie	Graduate School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Studies	Full scholarship provided by the university under study	UK UK	2010-2014
7. Mr. T	Mathematics, College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences	Full scholarship provided by the university under study	UK	2009-2014
8. Dora	Graduate School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Studies	Full scholarship provided by the university in her home country	UK	2008-2012

3.3.1.4. Funding and Financial Issues

Funding conditions, as demonstrated in Table 2, could be critical to the participants' being, and in turn, influence their identities. Six participants, Bob, Jiyeon, Karl, Sophie, Mr. T, and Dora received full scholarship, which meant their tuition fee and living expenses were covered. Dora was funded by her university in her home country, Syria. The other five participants were funded by the university under study. Scarlett received a student loan from a private bank in her home country, United States that provided funds to cover only her tuition fee. As her family did not provide financial support, she needed to work to earn funds to pay for her living expenses. Denise was in a situation similar to Scarlett's in that she was solely responsible for funding her education without help from her family. Denise used savings from past work experiences and her salary from working as a research associate on a project to pay the tuition fee. She managed to cover two years, but was unable to come up with enough money for the third year. Her school decided to award her a one-year scholarship to cover her tuition fee. At the same time, she used her savings from previous work to pay daily expenses. Scarlett and Denise were under financial stress. They were constantly worrying about coming up with money to pay for the tuition fee and living expenses (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). They felt bad about themselves because they could not support themselves properly as responsible adults. In this sense, their being financially insecure changed their identities.

3.3.1.5. Subject Disciplines

Informed by the literature reviewed, difference among academic disciplines might contribute to the participants' identities concerning how they see the self, others and the bigger environment (Chiang, 2003). As shown in Table 2, Bob studied in Business School. He was passionate about his area of study, and was very hardworking. Jiyeon, Scarlett, Sophie, Dora from the Education department, as well as Denise, who studied international relations, were all from the College of Social Sciences and International Studies. They all expressed feeling lonely and distant from their supervisors' own research project. Karl and Mr. T were students

at the College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Both of them could be characterised as autonomous, independent, disciplined, and skilled problem solvers. In this sense, my participants' learning experiences in the Science and Education departments reflected Chiang's (2003) assertion that differences can be found among different academic disciplines.

3.3.1.6. Stage of Doctoral Study

Table 3 shows each participant's four interviews taken place at the time of their educational attainment. The four interview dates also demonstrated regularity of our interview conduct. Incorporated this interview calendar and stage of doctoral study helped to identify tasks and milestones each participant was dedicated to accomplish.

My participants exhibited different Ph.D. phases. During the data collection timeframe between 2011 and 2012, Bob was in the first year of his Ph.D. However, far from feeling a sense of accomplishment, he worked hard, attended courses, and attempted to acquire certain additional certificates. Scarlett struggled justifying her research design and gaining her supervisor's approval of her writing. Denise completed her data collection and was in the cyclical process of writing and revising her work in response to feedback from her supervisor. Jiyeon's research design concerning couple-hood was highly regarded by her supervisor, but she had to keep herself away from the research for several months due to her own marital discord. Sophie, Mr. T and Karl were in the process of data collection and were occupied with the fieldwork, interpretation, and analyses. Dora was the only one who was at the late stage of writing about her findings ultimately submitting her thesis during the period of our interviews. She dedicated all her time to writing in order to submit and defend before her student visa expired.

Including differences in the stages of study was included intentionally to elicit additional insights. Hence, it was advantage to work with people at different stages of the Ph.D. process.

Table 3. A calendar of each participant's four interview dates

	1. Bob	2. Jiyeon	3. Karl	4. Scarlett	5. Denise	6. Sophie	7. Mr. T	8. Dora
July 2011		05/07				13/07		
August 2011							14/08	26/08
September 2011			06/09	07/09				
October 2011	11/10	18/10				27/10		
November 2011					18/11		25/11	29/11
December 2011			01/12					
January 2012	15/01			01/01		27/01		
February 2012					07/02		19/02	
March 2012		03/03	14/03					
April 2012	08/04			23/04				
May 2012					23/05			17/05
June 2012			08/06			08/06		
July 2012							29/07	
August 2012	29/08	01/08			08/08			07/08
September 2012				10/09				

3.3.1.7. Personal Situations

During the timeframe of the in-depth interviews, several countries were in the international news consistently due to political unrest and economic crisis. I witnessed the influence such situations enacted on the participants in relation to personal situations in their home country, in addition to the influences of their marriages, their supervisor, and intimate relations. Longer intervals shown in Table 3 between interviews due to unintended implications of such influences evoked additional issues for further exploration.

Among the group of participants, only Karl and Denise followed the intended interval of allowing three months between scheduled in-depth interviews. Only veering slightly off schedule, Sophie, Mr. T and Bob completed interviews close to the intended dates, whereas Jiyeon, Scarlett and Dora were significantly off the track. During the interview period, Jiyeon experienced marital problems and need time to get back on her feet during which she returned to South Korea because she recognised the need to be with family and friends back home. Scarlett felt that she had to fight with her supervisor and the school and also felt depressed due to a breakdown of her intimate relationship. Her interviews were delayed because of her sense that she needed time to feel better about herself. In Dora's case, she felt that she was unable to be with people unless her writing was completed. She was writing under extreme pressure, needing to finish everything—writing, viva, and graduation—before her student visa expired. It was the Syrian political unrest that made her situation peculiar. Personal situations showed the importance of including historical and biographical perspectives about my participants' experiences to explore how their identities evolved in their doctoral education journey. This way, identity evolution was connected to the larger structure while this research was undertaken (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The diversity of my participants–differing cultural and social capitals, different issues for students from different countries as well as different stages of

PhD study—has been the strength of this research. Involving the participants and their lived worlds enhanced the depth and width of my research (Denzin, 2001). The next section addresses the participants' roles.

3.3.2. Participants' Roles

I did not treat my participants as passive subjects by subjecting them to box ticking questionnaire surveys or highly structured interview exercises. Instead, my participants were empowered to play an active role in the interviews as I encountered them to ask questions, reflect and evaluate to hep me explore various issues confronting the different participants (Silverman, 2006).

To achieve the research goal, this longitudinal narrative study required the participants to be active, critical and reflective. In this research the overseas doctoral students were considered active, critical and reflective. They were not only interviewees but also active decision makers who had performed agentic power to meet the changes in the bigger structure on a daily basis. They were capable of analyzing and evaluating events and encounters critically. They constructed meanings and made sense of events in order for them to be the storytellers during our interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 2001; Silverman, 2006). As storytellers, they helped to inform this research of an inquiry of narratives premised on the participants' active reflection and meaning making processes of their lives. Participants are often considered as "repositories of facts and the related details of experience" waiting for the treasure hunter to dig, probe and excavate (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 8). My participants indeed carried with them very diversified backgrounds and experiences. I, on the other hand, prepared the right tools, namely, appropriate questions and rapport, to accomplish the job (Kvale, 2007). Nevertheless, my participants were not just repositories but also the treasure hunters who owned precious experiences with stories that they would share with me. In so doing, they recounted where and when the experiences were encountered, with whom, under what conditions and the nature of sentiment

attached to the experiences. As my participants came from various backgrounds, they had a role that marked them as carriers of multiple sites. Moreover, experiences were encountered in a restless manner. Approached properly, my participants could share the on-going engagements about the justification and emotion embedded in the adventure. This was in line with Holstein and Gubrium's (1995, p. 14-15) view of the participants' roles as both "a rational" agent who offers reasons and opinions and "an emotional" agent who is "a wellspring of emotions" (p. 14-15). My participants were the "practitioners of everyday life, constantly working to discern and designate the recognizable and orderly parameters of experience" (*ibid.*, p. 16).

My participants' narratives exhibited trajectories and storylines of their lives in our interviews. I found it necessary (also strongly suggested by the examiners of my thesis) to form a section to describe my participants in this chapter rather than in the findings chapter (as organised in my original thesis). To accomplish this I include in the next section a cameo for each participant to contextualise identities of the participants.

3.3.3. Participant Cameos

A cameo about each participant was written in order to provide readers a complete picture of each participant. The cameo was constructed based upon our interviews from 2011 to 2012. I intend to give the reader a more naturalistic sense of each person. This is designed to help the reader contextualise the participants.

3.3.3.1. Bob

Bob, 25, from Greece, is a student at the Business School. He has a stable girlfriend. He had one year of professional experience before spending a year in the army to complete the one-year compulsory military service required by his

native country, Greece. In so doing he felt that he had gained valuable life experiences. He also believed that his army experience helped him become a person who could handle difficulties with a calm attitude. Bob shared that his parents believed strongly in his abilities and educated him to become a firm believer in the value of hard work. He set goals to compete with Ph.D. students from the London School of Economics, so he planed ahead. This was shown in his postgraduate education trajectory where he started his Ph.D. at the same university right after he was awarded the master's degree. Bob strategically planned a path to make the best of established networks and connections within his discipline. Bob described himself as someone who was inclined to take the initiative and as being skilful at problem solving. In social situations, he reported meeting friends less and less frequently during the course of our interviews. In fact, he kept it to a minimum level by meeting with only close friends for a coffee. Regarding the Greek economic crisis, Bob expressed his helplessness and anger towards his government. Themes concerning EU and Greece, marking undergraduate students' exam papers, and young people's drinking issues in the UK frustrated him very much. Over time, the frustration level did not diminish. Bob described that he became distant from friends back home. He felt that he had established a life on his own in the UK, and felt it was inappropriate to share details of his relatively easier life in the UK with his friends back home. Towards the end of our interview, Bob even expressed that he felt like a stranger back home in Greece, as he realised that his whole life had been here in the UK. In the future, Bob hoped to work in his industry somewhere in the UK or United States.

3.3.3.2. Jiyeon

Jiyeon, over 30, from South Korea, is a woman with a very international background. We had known each other long before my research direction was formed. She learned about my study and volunteered to be my participant. Jiyeon spent the first decade of her life growing up in Canada and then United States due to her parents' educational pursuits. English was her first language. Jiyeon recalled

that after returning to Korea, she was bullied by both classmates and teachers because her Korean was not fluent. She proved her talents to those who bullied her by becoming the top student. Jiyeon was married and was teaching English language acquisition at the university level in Korea. She came to the university under study for her master's degree from 2008 to 2009. Her husband accompanied her and was self-studying English language. Meanwhile, she taught English language to undergraduate and postgraduate students in a language centre set in the campus. She acquired a full scholarship for her Ph.D. programme. Finances, hence, were not an issue for Jiyeon and her husband. Jiyeon revealed that a life centred on study was not her style. Rather, she preferred to live fully with a complementary personal and social life taken into consideration. Jiyeon said that as a couple, she and her husband had quite an active in social life; however, in recent years she recalled that they had been less social than before, at her husband's request. Something had changed his attitudes towards socialising. He wanted her to be home when she was not teaching or studying. Eventually, Jiyeon decided to file for a divorce thinking it was best for her. Because of her divorce, she could not engage in her research and realised that her decision to end her marriage had influenced her parents' social image. Her divorce symbolised a flaw in her family and could make her family a laughing stock in front of relatives. It was then very difficult for Jiyeon to face herself and her parents even though they did not blame her at all. They simply wanted her to be well. It took Jiyeon some time to feel positive about herself, her life, and her study. In the future, Jiyeon wanted to work in the academia in English speaking countries before eventually going back to South Korea.

3.3.3.3. Karl

Karl, over 30 years of age, from Germany, is a student studying fluid engineering. He worked in a university in Germany for several years before his Ph.D. commenced in the UK in April 2010. He described himself as independent and was used to finding his way around by himself. He appreciated help offered by his

department concerning his research. He also described himself as being organised. In fact, Karl devoted 40 hours per week to study, and social activities took place outside research. He mentioned up one major issue that destabilised his life, however, that in the first year of his Ph.D. he had to move four times. He finally was settled shortly before our first interview. He felt a great relief, as he could finally begin running, singing, and biking regularly again outside his studying hours. He shared that one major reason he came for the Ph.D. was to meet new people and cultures. Regarding his studies, Karl recounted that he had no networks established with people in the same field in his department, as he was the only one working on fluid engineering. In his last year Karl reported having more friends back home visit him more often, so he organised trips and tours for them to learn about the place he had lived. Karl reckoned that his national identity as a German had a bitter after-taste. He saw himself as a European and less a German, and would like to see more connection established between European countries in Europe. Despite being an independent person, he still became terribly homesick. He would phone friends and family. He felt that speaking with them and being reassured that they still knew who he was comforted him. In the future, Karl would like to work in the fluid engineering industry. He was very optimistic regarding work opportunities due to a high demand for professionals in his industry. However, Karl felt that he was too old to be adventurous in a space outside English and German speaking countries.

3.3.3.4. Scarlett

Scarlett, above 30, from the United States, has many years of professional work experience before starting her Ph.D. journey in 2009. She was strongly influenced by her first time study abroad experience when she was 16. She spent the summer in Slovenia in 1994 in the middle of the Balkan war. Her being a person, an American, and her belief were challenged heavily. As such, she reflected on her upbringing and background and felt that the more educated and the more culture she was exposed to, the more that she realised that Americans were not right and

there were so much about being American that was not right. Nevertheless, being an American was still who she was. Scarlett began her doctoral programme as a wife with her husband being deployed in Iraq. They were allowed to meet three times a year when he had holidays. Earning her Ph.D. made her realised that she was alone, and she had to be independent. Scarlett was upset to learn that when her husband was laid off, he did not want to move to the UK and live with her. Instead, her husband wanted to move back to the States. She remained alone and finally filed for a divorce in 2010 and it was finalised in 2011, shortly before our interviews were begun. Her family did not support her decision. This led Scarlett to isolate herself from her major support system. She suffered from such isolation. As an American, she described being subjected to many misconceptions from other foreign fellow colleagues, who somehow assumed that being a native English speaker meant that she encountered no difficulties in doing a research. Scarlett admitted that she had not been hardworking and productive, but would like to believe that it would have been a different story had she received proper support and constructive feedback from her supervisor. She also described having difficulty gaining access to collect data. Based on the difficulties she experienced in supervision and research, Scarlett recounted in our last interview that she was seriously considering applying for a supervisor change even though her primary supervisor was famous in the field. Scarlett felt that the overseas education has made her more independent and strong. She was able to face difficulties in life. The journey opened up her outlook in life. In the future, she would like to work in the academia and she knew she could make it wherever life led her.

3.3.3.5. Denise

Denise, over 30, from Armenia, is studying politics. Denise described that coming from Armenia, which is 99% white Armenian and Christian, her first overseas postgraduate education in 2003 was a striking experience. Her overseas experience opened her eyes to multiple people and cultures, her ears to various languages and sounds, her nose to exotic smells, and taste buds to a variety of

new foods and spices. After some time, she felt that Britain would not be Britain without all its different cultures. When she began her doctoral education in 2009, Denise worked as a research associate for two years at the university where she obtained the master's degree to fund her tuition fee and the living expenses. October 2011 marked her third year into the Ph.D. programme and she wanted to devote her time to writing up; however, she was very frustrated as her research associate job came to an end. She then became very much worried about her finance and her Ph.D. progress. Denise worked on writing and preparing her work for publication to ensure being recognised for future profession in academia in English speaking countries. Early in our interview, Denise thought Australia would be too far a location for her to seek employment, but in the last stage of our interview she felt it would be just fine, if there were good position available.

3.3.3.6. Sophie

Sophie, below 30 years of age, from Cyprus, is a Greek Cypriot studying Special Education. She and I were members of the same department. She was awarded her first master's degree in 2007 in the UK. She worked full time back home and decided to pursue doctorate in the same university in 2009. She visited home regularly to celebrate holidays and for data collection purposes. Sophie felt scared because most of her friends left after the first year into her Ph.D. study. As a result, she joined the Greek society to seek familiarity even though it was like being home and was less interesting because she already knew about the culture. She reflected that probably there were not many Greek Cypriots registered in the doctoral programme where she could make long-term friends. She explained to herself that was probably why her social circles were mainly Greeks from Greece rather than from Cyprus. To facilitate data collection, Sophie spent the summer of 2011 in Cyprus, where she spent time with her whole family. She described it as a rare opportunity because like herself, her siblings were all studying abroad in different countries yet that summer was a time when they got to be with each other. By the time we had our last interview, Sophie expressed that she realised feeling

lost and chaotic was normal in the process of obtaining a Ph.D. She now knew to expect difficulties and challenges and she accepted them. She knew she would survive. She felt comfortable about her research and evolved to see herself as more of a researcher than a student. Sophie described becoming more flexible and calm version of herself during the course of the doctoral journey. In the beginning of our interview she did not believe she could have a career overseas. In our last interview session she felt that her career would not be limited by location any more. She felt that she could be happy wherever she would be, as long as she had people with whom she could have actual conversations and a job that fulfilled her.

3.3.3.7. Mr. T

Mr. T, below 30 years of age, from Greece, studies mathematics. I got to know Mr. T through Sophie. His Ph.D. was part of a collaborative project established by two universities, a research centre where the actual experiments took place, and a company that funded his study. In this case, Mr. T had more supervisors in different sites than ordinary Ph.D. students. He expressed that the one he consulted the most was the university professor. He described that the joint project allowed him an opportunity to practice a real life work situation where interpersonal communication and working within a team were crucial. Although his funding could support him for another year, Mr. T already expressed feeling pressured by financial uncertainty in the future and aimed to ensure that his Ph.D. would progress according to his plan. Mr. T noticed a change in his social life, as he met friends much less frequently. He felt that it was a combination of having a stable girlfriend, stress, and the late hours coming back from the research centre. In the future, he aimed to start a career in the industry in the UK or other European countries.

3.3.3.8. Dora

Dora, over 30, from Syria, studies language education in my department. She had previous postgraduate education experience in the UK in a different university. Dora was fully funded by a university in her country and was obliged to go back to Syria and teach in that particular university after her doctorate was accomplished. Before our second interview, Dora's supervisor suggested that she should stop watching news, as she was highly affected by the news coverage about Syria's political situation. She felt that the western media was manipulating the news coverage and she felt very uncomfortable when people came up to her to show their sympathy while her family and friends had been telling her otherwise. During the course of our interviews, Dora commented that she intended to not have a social life at all until she submitted her thesis in May 2012. However, she needed to sort out a plan to find a flight home, as there were political sanctions that might change her accessibility to go home. Dora's plan was successful and she was awarded the doctorate, managed to attend the graduation in July 2012, and was able to go home before her student visa expired. Looking back, Dora felt that she had changed after being overseas for many years. She described feeling more confident in using English, especially in academic events and occasions. Similarly, she became more comfortable using English in front of her fellow co-nationals because using English was becoming more natural for her which made her feel less as though her speaking English was a way of "showing off". Dora looked forward to going home rather than 'visiting' this time. She was proud of being able to return to teach and contribute to the university that funded her. She was very satisfied to have a job secured due to her scholarship. She felt tahat her new life with her family and friends around would develop positively.

3.3.4. Concluding Remarks

In my research study, the participants were considered to be active, critical and reflective practitioners of life and collectors of stories with significance. They could

be rational and emotional on the journey of piecing past, present and future experiences together. Each of my participants had unique and particular encounters that shaped their identities along the way. While some identities prevailed, some identities went through change or remained the same. The participants' engagement in this inquiry has illustrated that their identities evolved and that this study has evolved with them.

The next section describes the pilot study and how the pilot study contributed to the main study.

3.4. Pilot Study

Before the main data collection for my study was begun, I undertook a pilot study. There were issues, such as developing my own interview skills, assessing the effectiveness of the interview schedule, the realities of the researcher-participant relationship, and individual participant's situations that I need to explore and understand in order to ensure that the design of my study was appropriate and that I felt confident that I had the skills to undertake the research. This section describes the pilot study and how it enhanced the design and conduct of the study.

3.4.1. Strategies to Recruit Participants for the Pilot Study

The pilot study was initially designed to provide me an opportunity to practise my interview questions and skills.

I considered that experienced doctoral students would be the ideal group to participate in the pilot study. It was not my intention to limit participants based on educational and professional background, gender, age, and prior experience, and so, at this stage, being an overseas doctoral student was the only criterion for being a participant in the pilot study. Nevertheless, I wanted diversity in my sample

of participants given my goal of wanting to investigate participants' views from an intercultural lens. I asked two friends of mine who were also overseas doctoral students in my own department to take part in the pilot study and both agreed. One of them explicated my research goal, research methods and research questions to a third student who was also from my department. This third student expressed a strong interest and decided to participate in the pilot study.

Recruiting, in this sense, was conducted using convenience and snowballing strategies.

3.4.2. Participants in the Pilot Study

This section describes the pilot study participants and discusses the importance of their diverse backgrounds. Both personal and academic information was gathered in order to form a deep understanding of how historical and biographical data shaped participants' narratives and formed sequences from their narratives.

3.4.2.1. Personal Information of the Pilot Study Participants

Table 4. Personal information of participants in pilot study

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Nationality	Student status
1. Cindy	Female	Over 30	Taiwanese	International
2. Lily	Female	Over 30	Taiwanese	International
3. Kobe	Male	Over 30	Omani	International

Table 4 describes the three participants, Cindy, Lily and Kobe, and their personal information. Their names in the table are all pseudonyms. Each was over 30 years of age with several years of professional experiences prior to beginning their doctoral education. In the beginning, I focused my questions narrowly on an intercultural interaction perspective despite the literature reviewed emphasising the

interwoven connections of past, present, and future when it comes to issues of identity formation. Cindy and Lily were both Taiwanese and we had known each other for a long time before this study. Kobe was from Oman and we had gotten to know each other through Lily. All three participants were categorised by the university as international students, meaning that they came from countries outside EU and were required to pay a higher-level tuition fee compared to their EU and UK counterparts. As I learned more about the pilot participants' background and past, I realised that the lived experiences informed and influenced, to different extents, what they thought and felt now. Feeling excluded by co-nationals, making the decision to change the methodology of their research, and losing an identity familiar to them for more than two decades were examples of the experiences encountered by members of the pilot study. The information allowed me to learn about the critical events that shaped and changed these individuals.

3.4.2.2. Disciplinary Features and Academic Background of the Pilot Study Participants

Table 5. Academic background of participants in pilot study

Pseudonym	Department	Funding	Master	PhD	Interview dates (D/M/Y)
1. Cindy	Graduate School of Education	Self-funded	1. UK 2. UK	2008-2013	5/6/2011
2. Lily	Graduate School of Education	Self-funded	1. Taiwan 2. UK	2005-2012	7/6/2011
3. Kobe	Graduate School of Education	Full scholarship provided by a university in his home country	1. UK 2. UK	2005-present	8/6/2011

Table 5 shows the academic backgrounds of the pilot study participants. Cindy, Lily and Kobe were students in the Education department, and we immediately formed a community identity based on our being students from the same department. Such close links strengthened and enriched our narratives,

which in turn became one apparent feature in the interviews. All three participants were very critical and analytical regarding their ontological and epistemological understandings of knowledge and reality, as well as their philosophy towards life, family, and friendship. In addition, they constantly asked me whether or not they had answered my questions or digressed from the intended topic. It was as if they utilised what they had learned in the Educational Research modules to evaluate their responses to the questions posed to them in the pilot study. Coming from the same department indeed helped us to form a tight bond to understand each other more deeply. Nevertheless, lack of diversity did constrain my ability to explore disciplinary differences, and thus this experience in the pilot study underscored my desire to seek as much diversity as possible among the participants for my actual study.

3.4.2.3. Financial Aid

Financial support is an important element of a doctoral students' being and identity evolution (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Kobe was the only one who received full scholarship from a university in his home country. This scholarship took care of his tuition fee and living expenses. In addition, he was guaranteed a professional position after he completed his doctorate. This meant that Kobe was obligated to return to start a career in academia at the university that provided him with the scholarship. Cindy and Lily were self-funded. I learned that Cindy was financially support by her aunt, who did not intend to seek repayment. Nevertheless, Cindy felt the pressure of owing her aunt a huge favour.. Lily refused the support offered by her father. Instead, she utilised all her savings and accepted partial support by her mother to pay the tuition fee. She earned money for living expenses by working at the university kitchen and as a cleaner. At the superficial level, they seemed to be fine, as they were able to amass the financial support they needed.. The in-depth interviews led to a deeper understanding of the possible pressures they had encountered because of financial matters and other reasons. I would not have been able to learn about those pressures, had I not earned their trust.

3.4.2.4. Prior Experiences in Education in the UK

Cindy, Lily, and Kobe all had two master degrees. Lily's first master degree was earned outside the UK in her own country. The rest of the participants earned their master degrees at UK universities. The prior UK experiences of many participants suggests that these students would encounter fewer difficulties while pursuing their doctoral education overseas in the UK given that they were more experienced with the UK's academic requirements and because they were used to living in the UK. On the other hand, it might suggest that students who had no UK education experience might be more likely to encounter challenges in their academic and personal lives.

3.4.2.5. The Ph.D. Phases

My pilot study participants began their Ph.D. in different timings. They each were occupied by different tasks. Understanding such tasks allowed me to learn how their everyday lives were organised.

Lily and Kobe started Ph.D. five years earlier than me, whereas Cindy was one year earlier. I learned that they all had very busy lives. Both Lily and Kobe had finished their data collection and, as such, their days were dedicated to enduring a cycle of writing, meeting with the supervisor, and revising. Cindy had just finished data collection and was busy sorting data. She tried different software to help her sort her data before interpretation. She was at the stage where her writing was more focused on finding facts, making a list of them, and writing about them. Given the stages Lily, Cindy and Kobe were in on their doctoral journeys, it was very generous of them to contribute to my research by agreeing to participate in the pilot study. Lily was awarded her doctorate at the end of 2012 and Cindy in late 2014.

Kobe had to return to the university that had sponsored him in mid 2012 to fulfil that obligation. I learned that doctoral students at different phases had different writing requirements, and as such, many of them had different expectations from the supervisor's feedback.

Given that the only criteria for joining the pilot study was being an overseas doctoral student, the interviews conducted as part of the pilot study revealed that certain elements of the participants' backgrounds proved to be critical and valuable for investigation. The next section unpacks in what way pilot study informed the conduct of this research.

3.4.3. The Extent to Which the Pilot Study Informed the Main Study

The pilot study pointed out issues I had not previously included in my interview schedule. I recognised that there were needs of the need for an introductory meeting, forming new interview questions, devising a new interview protocol, and the need to listen to and interact with the participants without taking notes.

3.4.3.1. The Interview Flow

Each pilot interview took around 90 minutes on average to complete. Cindy decided to have a coffee during our interview time whereas Lily chose to go for a long walk while we conducted the interview. Kobe chose to stay in his study room, but devoted his teatime for our interview. I was less concerned with where the interviews were held than I was in ensuring that the participants were at ease and felt comfortable.

To conduct the interviews, there was a need to devise interview questions and an interview protocol. I noticed that all three pilot participants were startled when the initial interview questions aiming to explore the changes they experienced included, "*How much have you changed? What has been the impact on your life of these changes?*" Probably because the pilot participants were veteran doctoral students, they managed to come up with answers. After giving their response they asked further questions regarding which areas I intended to focus on in my study. They inquired as to whether stories concerning academic study were satisfactory to answer my main research question. They commented that the initial questions were too broad and general, and lacking in clarity and focus. That was why they were startled.

To improve my chances of collecting useful data, I needed to form new questions and devise a new interview protocol. Originally, I started the interview with a warm up activity designed to provide the participants an introduction to my research goal and learn why it interested me. After the introduction, I would signal the beginning of the interview by saying, "So, are we ready?" After setting up the audio recording and preparing to take notes, I would ask the initial interview questions. The revised interview protocol kept the introduction, but added to it initial interview questions to further explicate my research. The introduction was then followed by the signpost question, "*So, how are you?*" that would mark the official start of the interview. Also, I decided not to take notes during the interview. The pilot participants always stopped talking when I attempted to write down something. Clearly, taking notes at the interview disturbed the interview flow jeopardizing the chance that the participants would share stories that are most significant to them.

3.4.3.2. Relationship with the Participants

Given that 'strangers' and 'acquaintances' would be recruited for the main study, my pilot study participants strongly recommended that I have a meeting with the

study participants prior to first interview, as. The face-to-face meeting would be an opportunity to form a closer relationship with each participant.

Considering the need to have an introductory meeting before the interview started, I figured that I could use this meeting as a gate-keeping step. The purpose of having this meeting was so that the participant and I would form an identity as 'we' and 'us', and shift our relationships from being 'strangers' and 'acquaintances' to friends or partners in the journey of co-construction. Therefore, it was natural for us to greet each other by saying, "*How are you?"* when we met. This meeting protocol was adopted in the main study and functioned as expected. The potential participants and I met individually for a coffee to get to know each other and my research. Those who actually sat down with me at the introductory meeting all decided to participate in my research knowing how would be involved, and none of them dropped out of the interviews and the research.

Close relationships and friendship, in the case of the pilot study, did not constrain the conversation and the openness of the participants. On the contrary, Lily and Cindy were very direct and straightforward. They questioned my purposes, expressed doubts about the way I designed interview questions, and had opinion as to the interview content. Kobe was very direct, but expressed his directness in a polite manner.

Friendship was not a prerequisite to participate in my research, however, a close and trusting relationship with each participant was crucial. The element of friendship was not emphasised in the pilot study and I did not encounter difficulties because of my friendships with the pilot study participants. However, great care taken to evaluate whether or not and how in particular friendship enhanced and/or constrained the interviews.

Table 6. How the pilot study informed the main study

Items	The pilot study	The main study
1. Information of each participant's	• Nationality was the only information considered as	• Nationality remained as one of important criteria.

personal and educational backgrounds	important for the participants. • Where participants' undergraduate and postgraduate degrees were awarded would not prevent them from being a participant in my research.	• More were added to help contextualise the participants: age group, student status, department, funding situation, masters, and interview dates. • UK postgraduate education experience might imply being less difficult in study and life, so students with such a background were not excluded as participants.
2. Initial interview questions	• Initial interview questions were very academic and similar to main research question.	• Initial interview questions remained but moved to be included in the introduction of the research • A new initial interview question was formed: "How are you?" • Examples of the other interview questions included 'How's social life?' 'How was your supervisory meeting?' 'How's family and friends?'
3. Interview protocol	• Introduction of my study • Interview began • Initial interview questions	• Setting up a face-to-face meeting with each potential participant prior to our official interview. • Utilising the introductory meeting to explain, describe, and clarify my research goal and focus, as well as what the in-depth interviews would entail. • Utilising original initial interview questions in the introductory meeting as examples as to what would be asked in the interviews. • The new initial interview question ('How are you?') was asked to start the interviews. • Depending on individual participant's reaction to change orders of interview questions.
4. Researcher-participant relationships	• Initially: 'Close friends' and 'Acquaintances'	• 'Close friends' remained as part of my strategies to recruit main study participants • 'Strangers' added to become participants with an aim to develop friendship. • 'Friendship' was not a prerequisite to participant recruitment. • Establishment and maintenance of a close and trusting relationship was more important than developing friendship.
5. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation	• Data analysis began during the interview. • Themes were noticed and reflected in social, academic,	• Data analysis began once the interviews commenced. • Themes were noticed and expanded due to more diversity involved and found in main study participants.

	individual, and cultural aspects, four areas of focus • Categories were inspired and later formed.	• Four areas of focus remained to be the focus in the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
6. Reporting research findings	• The need of an introduction of each student emerged from data analysis to become a critical way to contextualise the student for the reader.	• The need of a paragraph, together with the footnote based on my field notes, to illustrate each participant was carried out in the first part of the findings.

3.4.3.3. Data Interpretation and Analysis

Analysing and interpreting the data from the pilot study informed the identification of the areas of focus I should explore in the interview. Additionally, the data from the pilot study prompted me to group significant events into categories and themes.

I was able to identify a number of themes among expressed prior experiences. Prior experiences in education, professional, intercultural interaction, and socialisation were recounted. Each participant's idiosyncratic trajectories and storylines were established. Each participant had emphasised different themes in the stories they narrated in the interview. Such recounts illustrated various factors leading each of them to become destabilised. I also noticed that, probably due to the one-off interview opportunity, the pilot participants tended to share with me the most significant events that had substantial influence on their being. In fact, these events revealed sadness, uncertainty, and helplessness. Negative experiences triggered expression of their personal feelings and thoughts the most. I could not help wondering about their perceptions of positive events. How do overseas doctoral students view 'life-changing' events? To what extent does the event trigger development or protection?

3.4.3.4. A Cameo about Each Student Involved

The pilot study made me realise that there was a strong need to introduce each participant. Such an introduction should focus on each individual participant and be presented in a section. The purpose was to provide background knowledge about the participants for the readers and to ensure that a complete picture was provided. This was done in the original thesis, but placed in the first part of the findings. Examiners pointed out the need to add a cameo of each participant. According to the examiners, it would be appropriate to include a cameo in an earlier stage of this thesis rather than in the findings chapter to contextualise each participant for the reader so as to present a more complete picture.

3.4.4. Concluding Remarks

The pilot study proved that this study was a feasible research project. An introductory meeting was added to the interview protocol, a close and trusting participant-researcher relationship required for this research was defined, data collection questions on the interview became more focused, note-taking during the interview was eliminated, how to present part of the findings was decided, diversity of the participants was attended to, and my involvement and disclosure of personal and emotional details were put in practice. These changes in the design of the main study were addressed in the pilot study. Both the pilot participants and the pilot study contributed substantially to the conduct and the skills required for this qualitative research.

3.5. Data Analysis

My research was based on qualitative data from interviews with participants. There were in total 32 interviews from 8 participants. Each participant was interviewed 4

times. The whole process of data collection lasted roughly a year from July 2011 to September 2012. I transcribed the interviews verbatim style. Each transcript was completed before the next interview was begun. This way, I was provided with time to review the stories to notice salient and significant events, which informed unique storylines of each participant. This step showed that the longitudinal nature of the study was taken account of. The goal was to trace changes and transformations in my participants.

I aimed to explore my participants' worlds, understand the subtleties of their experiences of being in the cross-cultural circumstance, learn about the impacts of these experiences upon their identities, and enrich my findings with insights. To achieve my research goals, I utilised in-depth interviews that generated meaningful qualitative data. They were then transcribed, printed, and bound to become eight booklets. Each individual transcript booklet represented the one-year journey of each participant. I grounded my analysis based upon the interview guidelines – personal, social, cultural and study. Nevertheless, researchers such as Cohen (2007), Ezzy (2002), and Gibbs (2007), reminded me that in addition to a pre-decided guide, unexpected issues could arise. To ensure general issues of interest and unanticipated matters were identified, I also applied thematic analysis as an approach to understand my data of individual participants and across all my participants (Ezzy, 2002). The analyses shed light on particular and similar issues. In effect, while the "scope" of issues was identified based upon important elements that indicated significance to the participants, the "range" of the issues was great (Cohen, 2007, p.466).

It is important to note here that from the moment an interview was begun, there were events and stories that caught my attention, as these events had a significant influence on the participant. While actively listening to and interacting with my participant, I was analysing by labelling codes to words, phrases, and episodes evoked by my inquiry of the participant's personal life, social life, intercultural interaction and study, and my engagement with the participants. As I did not take notes during the interview, my inquisitive mind was presented in the form of probing to verify my questions towards the issue under discussion. My own

background, the interview guide, and my personal and emotional involvement informed my hunches and level of sensitivity leading me to "filter" the ways I "perceive, document, and thus code" (Saldana, 2008, p. 7).

3.5.1. Data Analysis Material: Transcripts

My 32 in-depth interviews with 8 participants generated recorded materials that became the means for data analysis. This section describes the transcription procedure and the production of the transcript booklets for data analysis.

Digital technology has been very advantageous for this longitudinal narrative study. My use of an MP3 player provided "a high acoustic quality" without the need to use a microphone in order to avoid background noise (Kvale, 2007, p. 93). Unlike traditional tape recording devices, the MP3 player offered long hour recording capacity (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). In addition, the recordings were in a digital format that could be transferred directly to a computer (Kvale, 2007). Technological advancement made the recording, data storage and transcribing of the interviews more efficient and economical. Once stored as digital data in the computer, it was listened to repeatedly for recalling, transcribing, and analysis purposes (Gibbs, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Silverman, 2006).

I began to transcribe after each participant's interview was conducted and completed the transcript before the next interview was begun. This allowed me time to identity important issues and prepare for the next interview session. My intention was to sensitise myself to questions which I could have asked in different ways, as well as to pay attention to "cues that were missed" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 68). The level of transcription for this research was focused on what the participants and I have said. Transcribed data also included non-verbal actions, which were capitalised in brackets and were utilised to describe and remind me what happened during those silent moments. It was not analysed for reporting.

The transcript was completed using the verbatim style. Pauses, repetitions, 'mmm', 'hmmm' and the like were retained to convey authenticity and the speaker's uncertainty and hesitation (Kvale, 2007). The interviews were conducted in English, as it was the only common language shared by the participants and me. Accent was not a concern for the research focus, so it was not changed in terms of the spelling to show how the words were pronounced. My goal was to minimize alteration and tidy-up work so that the transcripts captured "the factual content" and how the participants expressed themselves (Gibbs, 2007, p. 14). A set of transcription conventions was followed (See Appendix 3 for transcription conventions). The outcome was one transcript booklet for each participant. The transcript booklet comprised each participant's four interviews and represented the participant's one-year journey during the course of my study (See Appendix 4 for an example of the cover page of the transcript booklet). Transcript booklets functioned as the primary data analysis material for interpretation, informing the findings and answering the research question. Reading each transcript booklet has allowed me to travel with the participant in the written form repeatedly.

The process of transcribing can also be, as Gibbs (2007) asserts, "an interpretive process" (p. 10). Listening to the interview while transcribing it, I noticed nuances and valuable issues relative to the research. I familiarised myself with each participant's narratives and stories (Gibbs, 2007). Also, I became aware of my own interview style (Kvale, 2007). Since I started noticing significant events of individual participant, I highlighted words, phrases, and lines in the transcript that appeared to be of great significance to the participant. The transcribing process was "enlightening" and informative (Ezzy, 2002, p. 70). This way, I also began the process of coding.

The transcript booklets were the main source of material for data analysis. Individual participant's trajectories were formed for further examination. The transcript booklets also provided me with a method to compare the participants. This way, experiences unique to individual participants and common across all the participants were explored.

3.5.2. Thematic Analysis as the Data Analysis Approach

I conducted in-depth interviews to explore, analyse and generate understandings of overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. The transcript booklets covered stories of common and peculiar experiences leading my participants to undergo journeys full of conflicting, joyous, uncertain, and hybrid thoughts and feelings. To understand the implications of overseas experiences for doctoral students, I applied thematic analysis aiming to not only "identify themes within the data" but also issues beyond my anticipation (Ezzy, 2002, p. 88). There were two rounds of data analysis. First, the focus was on individual participants. I aimed to contextualise each participant by exploring the life established around Ph.D. study. This helped me to form a cameo for each participant. Second, the analysis moved from individual to comparing across all the participants. I sought to identify key issues, as they might signal similarities and important elements (Cohen, 2007).

3.5.2.1. First Round Analysis Focusing on Individual Participant

I utilised the transcript booklets as the main means of analysis. The transcript booklets were designed to have two columns. The left column contained the data, which were the interview transcript. The right column was designed for me to write codes and notes (See Appendix 5 for an example of open coding the transcript).

To start analysis and coding, I laid out the transcript booklet. This step included "pre-coding" (Layder, 1998, cited in Saldana, 2008, p. 16), in which I highlighted significant words, passages and paragraphs that caught my attention based upon the interview guide. It was conducted using Word document processing system in my laptop. Highlighted parts were superscripted with numbers in the left column, which were coded with the respective number in the

right column. These highlighted parts were evidence and illustrations of my assertions. Open coding required a close examination of data and was much closer to the text. This way, emergent codes were identified. I mostly used the participant's words and phrases to name the code, so it was more descriptive (Gibbs, 2007). During the process of open coding, I examined the data, highlighted meaningful units for analysis, coded to illustrate "meanings, feelings, actions", compared and contrasted the coded units to re-code for "more inclusive codes" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 92). In effect, interconnections between codes were identified.

Next, I followed Gibbs' (2007, p. 42) suggestion to "move away from descriptions." I began to organise codes into categories by specifying "the relationships between codes" and "the conditions associated with a code" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 93). I focused on similarities, commonalities, and peculiarities in grouping. I did the job manually by writing in a notebook and checking the highlighted meaningful units, my notes, and the open codes in the transcript booklets. It was a process where descriptive codes were drawn together for further exploration. Once codes were grouped into categories, it was time to identify a hierarchy among the codes under that category. Certain codes seemed to have higher rate of incidence. This led to a re-organisation of the codes. Some codes became the main categories while others were under the codes and became sub-categories (Gibbs, 2007; Lichtman, 2006). Codes at this process became analytic in that the codes not only described but also "conceptualised" the thoughts and feelings of the participant (Gibbs, 2007, p. 43). This process was practised repeatedly in order for me to justify in what ways some categories make more sense than others.

The unique part was that I applied such an analytical process on every interview. This meant that each of the participant's four interviews were analysed following this repeated procedure. Each interview session went through pre-coding, open coding, and categorisation based on a critical review of relationships and hierarchies between codes. In so doing, codes derived from descriptive data were condensed from more than 100 codes to around 25 categories. For instance, in Bob's case, he brought up several key terms in friendship including 'forming a relationship', 'trust', 'go out many times', and 'close'. These qualities were identified

and categorised as key quality of friendship. It was later grouped under the theme of 'socialisation'. Each interview data analysis gave rise to around 25 categories in Bob's case, for instance (See Appendix 6 for an example of categories stemming from Bob's first and second interview analysis). I then compared across categories of Bob's four interviews to explore their interrelationships, commonalities, and particularities. This step allowed me to identify change and transformation of each participant in a developmental manner. Moreover, this allowed themes to emerge from each participant's interview journey (See Appendix 7 for themes emerged from individual participant's interview journey). After salient themes were identified from individual participant's journey, I was able to seek patterns, relationships, and themes focusing on all my participants.

I utilised thematic analysis to approach data concerning individual and all the participants. In so doing, saliencies embedded in each participant's data were identified. Close relationships, trust, and the interview guide allowed me to view each participant as a whole person. This way, a cameo of each participant was formed. A cameo was designed to describe each participant's unique journey and to contextualise the participant. The readers learned about and understood the whole picture of the participant rather than fragmented texts provided in later sections under different headings.

3.5.2.2. Second Round Analysis Focusing on All the Participants

After analysing each participant's interview data to inform the participant cameos, I then conducted a second round analysis by reading every participant's pre-coded meaningful units and the codes several times. This consolidated my understanding of each participant. Next, I focused on examining the categories and themes of all the participants to compare and contrast. This step led to a synthesis of categories across the participants, and allowed me to identify themes manifesting the meaning attached to the data (Lichtman, 2006). The second round analysis explored categories and the subsets of the categories to identify common themes.

In so doing, issues of different levels of "scope" were identified. The different levels of scope informed my participants' doctoral journey and influenced their identity evolution, while a wide "range" of each participant's experiences were explored, interpreted, and presented (Cohen, 2007, p. 466). This step informed findings of this study (See Appendix 8 for my coding book).

3.5.3. Concluding Remarks

I utilised thematic analysis as the data analysis approach. It provided me with systematic and flexible steps to focus on the participants of this study individually and collectively. I explored the interview data to identify issues specific to each participant. After that, I examined groups of categories of each participant to develop common themes. By simultaneously conducting data analysis and data collection, a method strongly suggested by researchers such as Lichtman (2006), Saldana (2008), and Strauss and Corbin (1990), I was able to remain focused on the four aspects – academic, personal, social, and cultural, while my participants' accounts reflected a vast range of experiences and issues. The interview guide provided me with areas of focus when conducting and analysing the interview data. Pre-coded meaningful units helped exemplify my assertion. Thornberg (2012, p. 86) notes that "insights, hunches, 'Aha!' experiences or questions" are evoked during data analysis. In this sense, I was able to adjust and re-focus my questions in the interviews. Based upon the process of looking for similarities, commonalities, and uniqueness, codes were grouped into categories. As the series of interviews progressed and the analyses continued, key themes began to surface and develop. Overall, data analysis has given rise to the emergence of important themes. The purpose was to answer my research question. Focusing on relationships between these themes allowed this study to demonstrate one year of an individual participant's doctoral journey and discover elements contributing to destabilisation in their lives. In return, how their identities evolved was traced. The next section addresses rigour of this research project.

3.6. Rigour

"Rigour deals with correct method" (Ezzy, 2005). As the researcher of this study, I strongly believe that meaning making and interpretation is socially constructed by interaction, which changes according to persons, contexts and over time. This longitudinal narrative study explored, delved into, and handled personal narratives by following in-depth interviewing principles and interactive methods (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Lewis and Ritchie, 2003; Silverman, 2005). The rigour of this qualitative study has been justified by virtue of credibility, transferability, and reflexivity (Flick, 2009; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

3.6.1. Credibility

This "audit trail of methodological and analytical decisions" ensures the procedure conducting this research has been rigorous (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 39).

Based on my own situation and observations of my fellow colleagues in the doctoral students' community, I identified issues, formed my arguments, and came up with research questions. I have argued that identity is a process of becoming, and that it is multiple, situational, fluid, and hybrid where contexts contribute to changes in being and thinking. Overseas education is argued to be a circumstance where learning, becoming, and change collide with each other, leading overseas doctoral students' identities to go through an evolutionary journey. It is then logical to suppose their everyday life practices lead their identities to go through more complex processes of negotiation and construction than home students. Focusing on process, I have traced changes by involving my participants to talk freely and individually for a year out of their doctoral education to inform my research goal and helped answer my research questions. I dealt with stories with non-judgemental and supportive attitudes to protect my participants and I from any

forms of harm. After every interview was transcribed, the participant was asked to read and verify the content. However, none of the participants found such a step necessary. When the transcript booklets became available, I asked the participants to verify the contents. I offered a copy of their transcript booklets as a record of the journey and only one decided to receive the booklet. Some replied by saying that there was no need to read what they had said whereas some participants expressed that reading their respective interviews in text would be upsetting as it would force them to go through certain experiences again. Furthermore, rigour has been employed in the analysis and interpretation of data (Flick, 2009; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Liamputtong & Ezzcy, 2005; Silverman, 2005). Taking a longitudinal narrative approach has enabled me in the following chapters to represent "the understanding of events and actions within the framework and worldview of the people engaged in them" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 39). Data analysis informed storylines and patterns unique to certain participants and common across all the participants. In the findings chapter I also utilised direct quotes as evidence to illustrate my findings and to strengthen my argument (Flick, 2009; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

Credibility helped ensure "rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" of this research conduct (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 5, cited in Silverman, 2006, p. 292). The next section addresses transferability.

3.6.2. Transferability

Transferability addresses to what extent the research findings and arguments can be transferred to other settings (Ezzy, 2002). The nature of my study was focused on eliciting narratives of personal thoughts, feelings and attitudes. My goal was to generate insights rather than replicable process and results. As my research sought to explore subjective, personal, and particular stories, reliability, validity, and generalizability were not appropriate as tools to appraise the rigorous conduct.

This study was conducted at a site where a particular group of people from different places have established life centred around their Ph.D. study. I was not in search of a universal pattern. I wanted to explore the experiences of specific individuals that have raised interesting issues for other overseas doctoral students and also for host institutions. This way, the small scale and slow exploration process would give rise to a holistic perspective to illuminate particular rather than "typical" experiences in this research project (Roberts, 2003, p. 127). The diversity of the participants provided this research with particular lived experiences. In this sense, this research was imbued with particularity rather than generalizability. This is to highlight that the experiences portrayed will probably be recognizable to numerous overseas doctoral students, while others may have had very different experiences. It would be very difficult to claim that this study could generate the same findings when conducted by another researcher because the participants would be different, have different backgrounds, circumstances, and understandings of their worlds. Also, different researchers would have different levels of involvement, interpretation, and bias (Ezzy, 2002).

I sat, listened and engaged with the participants, who have been active mediators on their lives, to transform the personal and insightful accounts of their lived experiences into narratives. I also shared with them my viewpoints and encounters from personal experience, which made it impossible to be objective. While subjectivity and contexts were embraced, biases needed to avoid.

3.6.3. Reflexivity

Conducting this qualitative study has raised an issue regarding subjectivity in interpretations of lived experiences. It would be unrealistic not to factor impacts of personal and subjective backgrounds and experiences upon understandings of everyday life in the cross-cultural environment.

Many scholars have discussed the subjective reflections of the researcher and the researched (Gray, 2003; Silverman, 2005; Silverman, 2006; Flick, 2009). Creswell (2009, p. 233) suggests that researchers should "reflect about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during a study." Flick (2009, p. 16) also notes that it is important for the researchers to reflect "on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings, and so on," and indicates that these reflections are "data in their own right" to inform "part of the interpretation." Recognition of any possible biases and misinterpretation is crucial. Hence, knowing yourself, being knowledgeable and sensitive can facilitate reflexivity (Flick, 2009; Gray, 2003; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993; Heyl, 2001; Wolcott, 1999). In addition to my own reflexivity, my participants also have acted as active interpreters of their lived experience. Reflexivity emerged as a prominent part for the participants in this research. They consciously and conscientiously examined and justified what they have said in order to remain true to themselves and not to be biased. The emergence of the participants' reflexivity deserved to be explicated alongside the conventional researchers' reflexivity.

My own background in international language teaching has led to contact across several national and cultural contexts. This has helped the growth of tolerance and sensitivity, but has also resulted in the development of a specific lens of perception. I tended to form presumptions based upon my personally accumulated background knowledge. Just because I have also been an overseas doctoral student, I wrongly presumed that the interactions at the cultural level between individuals coming from different national and cultural backgrounds would have been more dominant than interactions at the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. The misconception was unveiled by the participants' unanimous reaction during the interviews to my questions inviting them to focus on, for instance, the perspective of an 'unbalanced' culture. They reminded me that interactions between individuals were usually based on common ground, and that cultural differences had not been a factor when considering whether the interaction was meaningful and significant to them. I was then able to identify and refocus the direction of this research. The participants' remarks also reminded me that I have

been the instrument of the research. Moreover, I was "part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture" that I have been working to understand and analyze (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 43). Involving my personal experience was seen as a form of reflexivity. By so doing, my voice was located in this qualitative research. My professional background, the overseas doctoral student's status, the research directions, and relationships established with the participants have provided me access to ask the 'Why?' and the 'How?' questions, enabling me to present contexts of an interesting student group, "to experience the ways of a group firsthand" and "to learn what those in one group make of their experience" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 62).

The participants have been active in this study. In our interviews, we travelled together to negotiate and create an organic meaning of the lived world and the journey itself (Legard *et al.*, 2003). Probably because this community of individuals has accrued certain knowledge and skills in terms of research, the participants spent time and effort on reflexively examining their perceptions and feelings. When boundaries with regard to nation states, academic and socio-cultural contexts are crossed, dynamics and complexities come into picture to impact on previously barely felt and sensed encounters (Denzin, 2001). The participants reflected on these encounters and tried to make sense of them. To do so, their backgrounds and prior knowledge came into play. It appeared that doctoral education has provided time and space for them to critically reflect on events that have been significant to them in life. Through partaking in the research, every participant "translated" daily life experiences "into knowledge", and then "reports of those experiences or events, and activities" were translated "into texts by the researcher" (Flick, 2009, p. 77). It is worth pointing out that the participants have recognized that partaking in this longitudinal narrative study has impacted them as individuals as well as doctoral students. It was remarked that this journey has been regarded as therapeutic and enlightening (See Appendix 6 for examples of impacts of participating in this study upon some participants).

By virtue of reflexivity, both the participants and I underwent "experiencing, enquiring and examining" while the interviews were taking place (Wolcott, 1999, p.

51). Moreover, throughout the interview, as well as in the writing up stage, reflection from both sides continued to influence the "description, analysis and interpretation" as highlighted by Wolcott (1999, p. 62). It showed that in the conduct of such a longitudinal narrative study ongoing reflexivity from both sides ensured the rigour and enhanced analysis of the data interpretation and report.

3.7. Ethics

Ezzy (2002, p. 51) asserts that "ethics deals with correct moral conduct". Aiming to explore the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution, this research design, along with identity related issues, raised a need for sensitivity. In addition to adhering to the ethical codes established by the University of Exeter and BERA, I adhered to procedures recommended by Creswell (2009), Liamputtong (2007) and Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) (See Appendix 1 for ethical approval form and the consent form). How I addressed the ethical issues of my study is set out below.

3.7.1. Gaining Informed Consent

Ethical issues prior to the interview concerned recruiting, establishing rapport between the participants and myself, and ensuring that the participant understood the expected research conduct and his/her rights as a participant of this study. The participants were recruited via convenient, snowballing and voluntary methods. After they replied and showed interest in being a participant in my study, a letter of invitation, attached with a detailed description explaining the nature of this study, the procedures of data collection, the involvement of the research, and how the research findings would be used (See Appendix 2 for letter of invitation), was emailed to them individually. When the potential participant confirmed the desire and willingness to participate, he/she was invited to an introductory meeting where

we met face-to-face and I explained in detail the research and involvement required. Questions regarding longitudinal style and interview questions were clarified as well. Moreover, potential participants were informed about their right to participate and to withdraw. They were guaranteed anonymity and that the confidentiality of their participation, data, as well as data storage and access would be maintained.

3.7.2. Conduct of Interview

I did not take notes during interviews in order to avoid interrupting the participants. I utilised a MP3 player to audio record our interviews into digital files with the permission of the participants. These tracks were uploaded to my personal laptop right after the interview for storage and research purposes. I began to transcribe them as soon as I could. Prompt transcript of the interviews helped to ensure that all intended questions were asked of all my participants because if the transcript revealed an omission, my participants agreed that I could always contact them to arrange a make-up interview to fill the gap. As for the interview questions, they were asked in a friendly way as if to mimic two friends having a conversation about specific topics. Rather than asking formal questions such as 'How have you changed?' and 'How does this cross-cultural space treat you?' I asked my participants to answer the principal research question for 'How are you?' As they were informed of my research goal in the introductory meeting they replied and shared with me what had happened in their lives and how these experiences influenced their identities.

3.7.3. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Multiple interviews conducted in this longitudinal narrative study led to early transcriptions. I started to transcribe every participant's interview right after I

uploaded the session to my laptop. In the beginning, I listened to the interview only to make certain the recording was complete and clear. After that, I could delete the file on the MP3 player. I then started transcribing by listening repeatedly to the interview session. Each participant's four interviews were printed and bound as a transcript booklet. It was organised chronologically with a cover page showing the pseudonym, interview dates and page numbers. Each booklet was read repeatedly for analysis purposes. I was the only one who had access to these transcript booklets. Anonymity and confidentiality were a special concern at this stage. Any names of the participants, other people, and towns were carefully replaced with pseudonyms in each of the transcript booklets so that the information could not be used to identify participants' identities. Only big city names such as New York and London remained unchanged. Each participant was asked to read his/her interview transcript and the transcript booklet to verify accuracy. I also offered a copy for him/her as a souvenir. I did not make it a requirement for participants to read the booklet as this could cause them anxiety. Only one accepted the booklet as a record of part of her doctoral journey.

3.7.4. Storing of Data

After I uploaded each recorded interview session to be a digital file in my laptop, I listened to ensure the quality. I then deleted the file in the MP3 player. The data for this research include the recorded interviews, transcript, and the transcript booklets. During the period of research, the recorded interviews and every transcript were stored in my laptop as computer files and protected by passwords. The transcript booklets were stored in a room that could be accessed by me only. All data will be destroyed after this research is completed.

3.7.5. Vulnerable Participants

My participants were competent individuals conducting doctoral study overseas. Their experiences navigated them through the identity journey. Some had a smoother trip encountering few challenges while others experienced life-changing events. To share these stories, the participants had to talk about experiences that might cause them distress, causing them to become vulnerable participants.

The vulnerable status of some participants in the longitudinal narrative study came as a surprise, and my role as a researcher alone was not sufficient to handle such vulnerability. Lewis (2003, p. 64) reminds that "unexpected situations" always happen so that "in situ" measures are needed. To accommodate this possibility, interview questions need to be flexible in order to adjust to each particular situation. The reminder became very practical in some participants' cases, and it could be detected from the storylines and length of intervals between interviews. Because the personal accounts of the participants could be so sensitive, I was careful when I asked questions so as not to probe in a way that might threaten the wellbeing of the participants. In short, in conducting interviews to elicit personal accounts, my research conduct was intended to make the participant feel comfortable and to make the interview a non-threatening experience.

Although my participants were not defined as those who are "hard to reach", "silent", "hidden", "deviant", "tabooed", "marginalized" and "invisible," my participants would not have been deemed as a 'vulnerable group' in all probability prior to the research (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 4). Nevertheless, some personal vulnerability issues did emerge. Their lived experience and life stories illustrated that many of them were in stressful situations that made them vulnerable in some ways. Due to our conversations in the interviews, they had to go through experiences that led them to ambivalent thoughts and feelings again. Moreover, providing each participant his/her own transcript booklet was not universally well-received. In fact, some replied that the transcript booklet symbolised an upsetting journey that they would not like to go through by reading it again. In this sense, there was the potential that participation in my study would cause them distress.

I considered the participants' wellbeing as paramount. Hence, I sought to try to reduce the potential for distress by adopting a supporter identity providing personal care and sensitivity. Our friendship gave rise to my adopting the role of therapist -- someone who was full of empathy, listened without prejudice and judgements, and suggested various alternatives in response to different life situations in order to elicit a positive outcome. My therapist role was articulated by a few of my participants. They referred to the role by commenting on my caring nature and being non-judgemental reaction toward issues that challenged them. They also commented that it was a rare opportunity for them to have me listening to them wholeheartedly talk about 'self'. It did not mean that I diagnosed their 'problems' and 'prescribed' ways to 'fix' their problems. Indeed, it was the participants themselves who actively reflected on where, how and what they have become and enacted a responsible social agent's identity seeking to balance their identities. In so doing, the participants were able to minimize the risk of 'destabilizing' by analysing their reflections, enacting cautious plans and making reasonable decisions in responding to the world (Freire, 2005).

3.8. Conclusion

I set out to explore overseas doctoral students' experiences of learning and living in order to make the case that overseas education has an impact upon their identity evolution. My research goal was accomplished by virtue of a constructivist ontology, the employment of a longitudinal narrative methodology, and the use of the in-depth interview. I was given access to learn from my participants directly. My status and involvement also strengthened the conduct of the research. Guided by the areas of focus –personal, social, academic, and cultural—I was able to analyse data utilising the thematic analysis approach and interpret themes embedded from the participants' narratives. I sought to "understand and explain human and social reality" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66-67). Credibility, transferability and reflexivity justified the trustworthiness and the rigour of this research (Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2009; Kvale, 2007; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Silverman, 2005; Silverman, 2006). My concern

for ethics raised issues of emancipation and self-awareness in relation to the participants' reflexivity, power and influence of the impact of the participant-researcher relationships. All kinds of research can change participants. Reflexivity can destabilise participants' being and identity, but it also can be a way to arrive at a hybrid self by an on-going ambivalent journey. I sought to support these students throughout and beyond the research. In turn, their comments suggested that they were glad that they had been involved.

All in all, this chapter has illustrated the paradigm, theoretical perspectives, methodology and the methods that were suitable to address the research questions, involve the participants at all stages and arrive at the findings. The next chapter presents the findings that demonstrate overseas doctoral students distinctive experiences, illustrate change over time, and exhibit their identity evolution.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Chapter 2 reviewed literature concerning identity and doctoral education. Learning and living experiences during doctoral education informed changes underwent by overseas doctoral students on their educational journeys. While identities were maintained as relational and evolving, doctoral education was argued as a certain period of time and space where original and newly learned knowledge was pursued, challenged, and liberated to inform hybrid thoughts, feelings, and ways of thinking and doing things. This chapter reports findings to address my participants, eight overseas doctoral students, and experiences with regards to academic, personal, social, and cultural aspects in life. These areas were argued in 2.2. and 2.3. to be imperative to understand the implication of overseas status for doctoral students' identity evolution. Along with data analysis exploring each participant's unique storylines and significant experiences, salient themes were presented including the dynamic Ph.D. journey, supervisory issues, social, national, and cultural identities, intercultural interaction experiences, as well as changes in various aspects and impact of my study on my participants. Excerpts were utilised under each themes as illustrations and evidence of the theme. This chapter presents how studying abroad can influence overseas doctoral students' being and identity evolution.

4.1. Dynamics of the Ph.D. Journey

Educational pursuit was the primary purpose that led my participants to cross boundaries of nation-states and most probably, languages, to study and live in an environment that was different from home. This section reports phases of the Ph.D. and the respective demands, perceptions of the Ph.D. journey, writing, additional work, as well as perceptions of being a student and a researcher, all of which were components of my participants' experiences of learning.

4.1.1. Ph.D. Phases

My eight participants were at different phases of the Ph.D. study and, thus, were involved with different tasks. Exploring their phases identified milestones they aimed to achieve. Identifying participants' milestones would help this study to understand the effort required to complete a Ph.D. programme as an overseas doctoral student.

4.1.1.1. First Year Ph.D.

Bob was the only participant to have just started his doctoral education at the time of our first interview. Our interviews traced his first year in his Ph.D. programme. In the first two interviews, Bob remarked that he was focused intensely on reading. Also, he investigated additional learning opportunities to supplement his education. He managed to find courses that would provide him with highly sought after qualifications in his field. During the last two interviews Bob remarked being clearer about what he would like to focus on his research study. He understood that his academic focus would likely undergo changes throughout the course of his programme as a result of his increasing knowledge about his research subject and ongoing discussions about his progress with his supervisor. Further, Bob did not express worry about the likelihood of his academic focus undergoing change.

4.1.1.2. Prior to Data Collection

During the time of our interviews, Scarlett and Jiyeon were in the reading and writing phase of their journey in the phase prior to data collection.

Scarlett was working on reviewing literature to support her argument and explore directions for further study. She was frustrated with her failure to satisfy her supervisor's requirements. She felt uncertain about her progress and had doubts about her ability to collect data. Her frustration and doubt was continuous throughout our interviews. At the time of our last interview, Scarlett had still been unable to provide satisfactory written work according to her supervisor's opinion.

As for Jiyeon, at the time of our first interview, she was approaching the end of her literature review phase during which she explored alternative perspectives and viewpoints regarding her research topic. During our first interview she revealed that her being had encountered an obstacle that would greatly impact academic progress, namely that her marriage was experiencing difficulty. In the middle of the time period of our interviews Jiyeon was unable to work on her research given that her research topic explored couple-hood and relationships. By the end of our interview period, Jiyeon had managed to re-establish her academic focus. She also located some potential individuals she hoped would participate in her research study. She looked forward to working with them, interviewing them, and finding insights for her research question.

4.1.1.3. In the Middle of Data Collection

Sophie and Mr. T were in the phase of data collection when they participated in my research. Our interviews captured their states of confusion, difficulty, and achievement.

Sophie's research required her to conduct data collection in two different countries and during two distinct time periods, a design predisposed to challenges and changes. She worried about questions of access, particularly the challenge of securing participatory observations and interviews. Originally, she attempted to multi-task by observing, taking notes, interviewing, transcribing, and analysing. She

soon learned that it was exhausting and difficult for her to produce quality work. Discussions with her supervisors helped her to understand that it was normal that she wanted to complete all those tasks at once. Also, she accepted that her energy level was not at the level required to accommodate such an approach. She felt relieved and supported after making the decision to modify her multi-tasking data collection approach to a step-by-step plan. By the end of our interview period, Sophie had completed all her data collection and was in the beginning phase of data analysis. Her supervisors provided very positive feedback regarding her initial data analysis and she felt very confident that she was on the right track.

Mr. T's Ph.D. journey was different than other participants given that his research was part of a joint project incorporating universities and local companies. Mr. T needed to ensure that the whole project worked well to avoid being frustrated or failure. He engaged with people from different departments and involved himself in additional work to make certain that his project would progress properly. In the middle of our interviews Mr. T realised that the project might not work out. He then decided to start an experiment in relation to the project, which should guarantee positive results for his own research. Under such a complicated scenario Mr. T figured a way out to ensure the completion of his research.

4.1.1.4. Post Data Collection

Karl was the one participant who was at the end of data collection and in the beginning of data analysis, interpretation, and writing. Karl's interviews did not reveal that he experienced significant difficulties, on the one hand, or achievements, on the other, in terms of data collection. He considered research an ordinary process in his doctoral education. In the first half of our interviews, he demonstrated a sense of normality in terms of his learning and living. One thing that became evident in the second half of our interviews was the need to temporarily pause his Ph.D. research in order to assist a visiting scholar on another project that could provide him additional and useful data for his own research

purpose. It was this possibility of acquiring additional data that motivated Karl's supervisor to encourage him to take on the opportunity. By the end of our interviews, Karl confirmed that he had completed the other project, returned to his research, and obtained very useful information to help his research. In addition, he earned some money to sponsor his trip to participate in a very important conference. Working with the visiting scholar was a very positive experience in Karl's opinion. It enabled him to broaden his expertise and established network with people outside his field.

4.1.1.5. Writing Up

Denise and Dora were at the phase of writing up. This meant that they were heavily involved in analyses, interpretation, and writing about the findings.

Denise completed her data collection and was involved in presenting her analysis and interpretation. However, she was very frustrated because her supervisor was not able to provide feedback as soon as she had desired. Denise was in a unique situation, as her supervisor had resigned and was working in Australia. However, both the university and the supervisor agreed that he would continue supervising Denise. Differences in time zone and space led Denise to become anxious in the writing phase. While she had a strong intention to finish her doctoral education as soon as possible due to financial issues, she was unable to receive timely feedback from her supervisor either in written or verbal forms. She became so desperate in the end of our interviews that she was very much stressed by her progress and the financial condition. She remarked that she became weak and ill several times.

Dora was also in the writing up stage. She reflected on the fact that she was unable to focus on her writing due to the need to argue with people about the political unrest in Syria in the middle of our interviews. She participated in demonstrations in London and that took a lot of time and energy from her. As a

result, she became very stressed in catching up with the progress in her writing in the second half of our interviews, where she decided to stay completely away from socialising with people at the end of her writing. She brought up the need to finish writing, submit, pass the viva, complete corrections, obtaining the doctorate, and leave UK for Syria before her student visa expired. She emphasised that she had to practice the viva by herself. She considered mock viva lacked authenticity that she was not able to answer questions properly at the scene pretending the supervisor was the examiner. She then felt it was her own achievement passing the viva. In the end of our interviews, Dora was much more relaxed and was involved in social activities, as she had successfully submitted her thesis. She was preparing for going home.

My participants were categorised into five groups according to the phases they were in. This section showed that they always had different tasks to accomplish in order to achieve the milestones set in the doctoral education journey. In addition, personal situations, such as home country political unrest, economic crisis, marital discord, issues with supervisor, contributed greatly to their progress and identities. Study was not the only one focus in life for my participants to attend to.

4.1.2. Student-Ph.D. Relationship

Several participants of mine remarked that the Ph.D. was a lonely journey where the student was the one who was responsible for his/her study. To these participants, the supervisors could only provide advice and felt that sometimes even their families and friends were unable to offer solid help.

Take Jiyeon for instance. Ph.D. was a personal matter in Jiyeon's opinion. She found it difficult to share her study even with her husband.

And I think one of the reasons of that is because it takes up your life. The Ph.D. is your research, your study. It's your baby in a way and the fact that you cannot fully share that with your partner…I mean even if they do understand, I mean your research is your research. It's not yours and your supervisor's. Yes, they give you comfort and give you advice point you to literature and stuff like that but in the end, you are the only person who really knows about it. That's why they say Ph.D. is quite lonely and that's why I think a lot of divorces could happen because that's one part of your life that you just cannot share.

Jiyeon's first interview on 5th July 2011.

A relationship emerged between Jiyeon and Jiyeon's Ph.D. in which no one could or should come in between. In Jiyeon's case, her husband and the supervisor could provide opinions, support, and guidance. While the supervisor had a closer relationship with Jiyeon and her study, the husband was much less involved. The husband was left at the periphery compared to the supervisor, who had the opportunity to approach the centre. A sense of concern about the influence of working on a Ph.D. on the marriage relationship emerged from her recounts. Jiyeon intended to argue that although family, friends, and the supervisor could offer the Ph.D. student help and support, it was the student's responsibility alone to work on the research and to accomplish the doctorate.

Similarly, Sophie remarked that she did not intend to share her research with friends even though she knew that they cared about her being and the study. Sophie intentionally responded to her friends' questions regarding her study with a word: 'Ok'. She appreciated the gesture, but felt that it was too specific to talk about. It was annoying even sometimes, as the Ph.D. was not an easy or simple matter to respond utilising several sentences. Moreover, she felt that it was not easy to talk about when her research was at the phase of theories in methodology. As such, she reserved the need to talk about her study.

Jiyeon and Sophie had different views concerning the sense of being lonely in the journey of the doctoral study. They both felt that they were reluctant to share their studies with even people who cared about and closed to them. They were not alone, as Dora, Denise, and Scarlett also described similar feelings. In addition, they highlighted that it was the student's responsibility to achieve the goal they set for their research. They reported a more isolated learning journey and recognised the need for reserving time and space for them to focus on the doctoral research. In this sense, their relationships with their Ph.D. appeared to be more exclusive.

On the other hand, the other participants reported different kinds of learning experiences. Karl remarked that he had support from the department. His supervisor was literally next-door to him and available when he needed guidance. Rather than viewing the doctoral journey as a 'lonely' one, he considered it an 'independent' one in which he had the liberty to design, conduct, and experiment. In Bob's case, he established networks within his department before his doctoral education was begun. He emphasised the guidance received from his supervisor and the hard work he invested in the study. He had not once felt that he was lonely. Rather, he gained pride in completing what he set out to accomplish. Bob, from Business School, and Karl and Mr. T, from Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences, reported having their supervisors more involved in their doctoral journey. They tended to focus on milestones set and how they had achieved the goals. They considered challenges normal and anticipated to resolve them eventually. They were inclined to solve problems and enjoy the entailed sense of achievement. In such settings, their relationships with their Ph.D.s appeared to be more inclusive.

My eight participants came from three disciplines: Business, Social Sciences and International Studies, and Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. It was very interesting to find that my participants coming from Social Sciences and International Studies were more inclined to remark feeling lonely during their doctoral education journey, whereas those who came from Business and Engineering, Mathematics, and Physical Science tended to express feeling supported and helped. Moreover, my participants showed having different kinds of relationships with their Ph.D. research. Interestingly, again, those coming from

Social Sciences and International Studies tended to have an exclusive relationship while those from Business School and Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences were inclined to have a more inclusive relationship.

4.1.3. Writing

Academic writing at the doctoral level is not a simple task. The writing must make a case for the argument. Ph.D. researchers aim to provide plenty of justifications in written forms to demonstrate that their readings point to directions that show values for further research, that their data provides enough information to answer their research questions, and that the research findings are meaningful and make contributions to the respective field. The Ph.D. researchers in my study intended to achieve these goals by completing the writing of a doctoral thesis. When language and linguistic issues were not preventing the doctoral students from writing a doctoral level thesis, the question of how best to write the research became a salient issue.

Sophie's writing became significant for her. Her supervisors commented on the lack of assertion and authority in her writing. She found it challenging to implement their suggestions.

The only thing that I find a bit challenging is when I'm writing, I mean a small piece of my writing and it could be for my PhD thesis. They always tell me put your own personal stance more explicitly when you are writing. This is so hard for me. I mean literally, you are not allowed to do that in Greek educational system in Greek university. You would say your opinion implicitly and based on what other authenticity said. … I feel that I've done some improvement so far, but still I'm not there. They keep mentioning that. My supervisors keep mentioning that be more yourself. Write your personal opinion more clearly and your personal stance. It's one thing that I have to work out.

Sophie's educational background did not encourage writers to explicitly express their opinions, viewpoints, and stances. She was aware of the difference in what she had been taught and what was now expected and had been working on adding more authority to her writing.

> So, I tried to say my opinion, my personal stance explicitly, clearly and loud. I still remember that sentence. I was talking about two paradigms. And then I was talking about a third one that I was kind of developing by myself. "If we see this paradigm as paradigm see …" Oh my god, I'm inventing a paradigm now? And then I sent it to them and they told me it's an excellent piece of writing, but I still have to work on it, but it's an excellent piece of writing. I was like, oh my god, is this what they want? I mean it was too extreme for me to do such a thing.

It seemed that Sophie had indeed made an effort to write according to the supervisors' suggestions. She was not comfortable with the changes occurring in her writing. To Sophie, the new method of writing was an 'extreme'; however, she learned that she needed to follow her supervisors' suggestions in order to write a piece of research that would be recognised in the field that was dominated by English language academic writing requirements. Sophie therefore needed to practice this different approach to written expression before she felt comfortable and confident about the change.

Karl, similarly, remarked upon encountering similar issues with writing in the English language. He felt that he was limited to a style that was less able to accommodate and demonstrate agility.

I don't like writing in English at all. When I write in German, it's easy for me to make it sound more fun and easy to read while here I have to stick to very dry, academic language because it's the only way I can write it properly. So, it's not as easy to slip in a joke somewhere.

<div align="right">Karl's first interview on 6th September 2011</div>

Karl found academic language in English was not flexible enough for him to write in a way that implied humour, which was similar to what he was used to in the German language. He remarked that he was confident that he could write in English properly to complete his doctoral thesis, but that he was not fond of the seriousness within English. Similar to Sophie, Karl also demonstrated experience a sense of loss and, at the same time, a sense of becoming, but he did not strongly emphasise this realisation during the interview.

Scarlett came from United States where English was her first and native language. However, she remarked that it was not necessarily easier for her to write a doctoral level thesis.

I'm expected to write in British English. I'm expected to leave my Americanism out. I'm expected to quit make references to things that were American and assume that my readers would know what I'm talking about. If I said oh Columbine, every American would know Columbine, but I can't assume that a British teenager born in 1999 is going to know Columbine because they won't. Columbine happened in 1999 when they were born. Yes, there's a lot of movies and songs and it's all over Youtube, but why would they even go look that up unless someone had said, Oh, did you hear about this school shooting in the year you were born or blah blah blah, so it was just certain things like that making references to music making references to political or economic developments you know I'll say something like No Child Left Behind that George Bush put into place 2002. Well not everybody knows that. Just I'll make references to you know British Laws or British Commissions that people in the States wouldn't understand.

It seemed that language was an issue in Scarlett's case in the writing process, which was a surprising reflection for me to learn. She found it challenging when she needed to write and spell using the British system, as she was an American who was used to writing using American English. She seemed to take it personally compared to the other participants coming from other countries. She was upset when various lecturers criticised her writing for using American English. It was almost disrespectful in her opinion. Another challenge with Scarlett's writing had to do with making references. It felt natural to Scarlett to provide references in relation to the American context. She found it difficult to change and felt confused as to what types of references were permissible. Even though she came from an English speaking country, Scarlett considered that it was necessary to re-learn the writing process all over again. Compared to Sophie, Scarlett experienced a stronger element of 'loss' than 'becoming'.

There were common themes among the perceptions regarding their perceptions of the writing process, namely feelings of loss and becoming. It appeared that the level of competence with English did not prevent Sophie, Karl, and Scarlett from producing quality writings. They all managed to put aside familiar habits and meet the requirements of Ph.D. academic writing in English at a UK university.

4.1.4. Additional Requirements and Work during the Ph.D. Process

My participants' encountered diverse learning and living experiences as they endeavoured to explore ways to ensure their studies. One theme emerged concerning the additional requirements and work they engaged in during the doctoral education journey.

Consider Karl and Bob for example. They had responsibilities to tutor undergraduate students and mark their examinations. Such work allowed them to earn income in addition to the financial aid they received from scholarships. However, they both remarked that such experiences surprised them and led them to question the value of degrees obtained in the UK given that it seemed easier for students in the UK to be awarded the degree compared to Germany and Greece.

Karl described the way German higher education was pursued. He highly emphasised the students' responsibilities in the education journey.

> It's different in Germany anyway. If you do a degree, you have to push yourself. There was no pressure from outside. If you failed, you failed. It was not their problem. It was your problem. While here it's more like in a school where they really see you attend the courses and help you get through exams.

Karl's first interview on September 6th 2011.

Karl felt that German university students worked hard to achieve their university degrees, whereas UK university students did not seem to be dedicated to study. That was why UK universities needed to have different strategies to ensure their students' learning. As such, he speculated that the university accepted the responsibility of ensuring that the student was awarded the degree rather than having that responsibility rest with the students. Therefore, he concluded, UK universities are more likely to produce graduates with lower qualifications.

> Coming back to me where I fear of it, now that I know what the British system is, I wouldn't say it's like a low level, but it sounds to me s if it's quite easy to get a degree here and to get a Ph.D. here and I'm not sure the Ph.D. made in the UK is valued as much on the work market as one made in Germany, for example.

Karl's first interview on September 6th 2011.

Concerned about the quality of UK degrees, Karl had doubts in the value of the degree he would be awarded in the UK. As such, Karl worried that his degree and qualification might not be highly recognised in the future.

Compared to Karl, who had concerns about the value of his degree, Bob had different views on degrees awarded in the UK even though he also considered it easier to acquire a higher education degree in the UK context compared to Greece. Bob explained that UK universities were evaluated based on the number of students graduating with distinction rather than the number of failures. Bob's opinion was justified from the point of view of a business or marketing perspective. In his opinion, the university system in the UK was a free market where only the best students would be noticed. For Bob, it was a matter of survival of the fittest.

In addition to the responsibilities attached to their schools, my participants looked for opportunities to broaden their educations and to enhance their competences.

Karl had a 'side job' during his doctoral journey. He had an opportunity to help a visiting researcher to work on part of a research study. To take advantage of this opportunity, Karl had to stop work on his Ph.D. temporarily. However, his supervisor encouraged him to do so because the work would provide him with funds to cover the expense of his trip to a conference in Hawaii and because the results of the visiting researcher's work could be utilised in Karl's thesis. Karl was very positive about the experience, as it broadened his career prospects, helped him to establish new networks, and resulted in his being offered a post-doc.

Bob focused his time on studying and gaining additional certificates.

Usually in big universities like LSE, PhD in Business is 5 years, so the first year it's like a master. You attend 12 courses or something, so I think if I have to compete with these guys, I have to show that at least I have some courses. So, I attended two

courses in the first semester and I have another three now without exams … these three, but in the first semester I have one exam. … I think I am very competitive. … It's like an ego. I don't accept that someone is better than me. You know I don't hate him, but I want to be better.

<div align="right">Bob's third interview on 8th April 2012.</div>

During Bob's first year in his Ph.D. programme he examined the situation in the field and made the effort to keep himself competitive by discovering measures to enhance his ability. He planned and managed his Ph.D. according to estimates of the demands required by his study. His plans and practices demonstrated an identity that was independent, efficient, and responsible.

In Mr. T's case, he was optimistic and pragmatic. Overcoming challenges seemed to bring him satisfaction. Rather than seeing issues as problems, he viewed them as motivators driving him to be proactive.

That is why now I started this small-scale experiment as well in case things don't go well with the unit. At least I have some data from there.

<div align="right">Mr. T's fourth interview on 29th July 2012.</div>

When considering the progress of his Ph.D. within the context of the joint project in which he was involved, Mr. T anticipated that potential issues could emerge that might hinder his study. To avoid that from happening, he devised an alternative way to ensure that the joint project would continue and that he could obtain some data results for his own study. His evaluation of his environment, understanding of the research process, and his proactive efforts to ensure the success of his Ph.D. study demonstrated that Mr. T was highly autonomous.

My participants discussed the additional work and tasks involved in their Ph.D. journey that they were required to do or elected to do for various reasons. The additional work allowed them to learn about educational settings in a different context, and prompted them to reflect on the educational settings in their home cultures. Moreover, the additional work included additional courses and research opportunities providing them with additional qualifications and cross-disciplinary views. These contributed to expanding visions of their future career scope. Such additional qualifications and work meant that these participants had opportunities to be engaged with different communities.

4.1.5. Identity Presentation

In our conversations about the Ph.D. journey, it occurred to me that some participants resented being recognised as 'students', whereas some felt 'student' suited their beings. This section reports how my participants saw themselves at the doctoral level and how they would like to be seen by others. It was a matter of identity presentation.

Some participants firmly rejected the title of a Ph.D. student. They would introduce themselves by telling people what they did rather than who they were. In this sense, they focused on the 'Ph.D.' rather than the 'student'. This way, they were 'doing a Ph.D.' and not being a 'Ph.D. researcher' or 'Ph.D. student'.

> I don't feel like a PhD student at all. I do not feel like that is a part of my identity whatsoever. When people ask me, Oh what are you doing here in England? Then I'll say, Oh I'm doing a PhD. I NEVER EVER said I'm a PhD student. I always say, I am doing a PhD.

> Scarlett's second interview on 1st January 2012.

I don't see myself as a student. Student for me is someone who goes to lecturers and I just don't do that. I sit in my office and work on my project for like 40 hours a week, so I'm not a student. I always tell people I'm doing PhD.

Karl's third interview on 14th March 2012.

Karl highlighted the part of his identity where he had the liberty of managing his time, whereas 'students' were required to go to lectures set by the school. Similar to Karl, Denise also identified and introduced self as 'doing' a Ph.D.; however, she seemed to be curious about such differences.

I say I'm doing a PhD. I don't I think I don't say I don't use the word student or researcher. I say I'm doing a PhD now. What are you doing? Oh what are you doing? Someone is asking. I am doing a PhD. I don't say I'm a PhD student or researcher. Maybe because "We're student" is too studenty? Not so mature? … It's like something that you do rather than something that you are. A student gives you a certain identity of a student you know and it sounds like someone who just came out of the school and is going to study couple years before they get married or go to work you know.

Denise's third interview on 23rd May 2012.

If there's an option of 'researcher', I would just tick researcher cuz I have the feeling that they would put you in the certain category and according to that judge your ability or whatever it is I don't know.

Denise's third interview on 23rd May 2012.

Denise identified the issue of 'maturity' to describe why she considered 'student' was less likely to describe herself. It appeared that impressions attached to

students and researchers led these participants to decide how they preferred to introduce themselves and be addressed. To these participants, a 'Ph.D. student' implied being irresponsible, immature, and having no authority in study, whereas 'doing a Ph.D.' and being a 'Ph.D. researcher' manifested being original, creative, and independent, as well as occupying a position of authority. Furthermore, it seemed that they believed that other people also shared similar views. In this sense, they wanted to be identified as being responsible, independent, original, and having the authority of their studies. Hence, being 'a researcher' and 'doing a Ph.D.' better represented who they were and what they did in these participants' opinion. Nevertheless, there were situations where these participants were less resistant to be identified as 'students'.

> I don't like to identify myself as a student. I'm not a student any more. And for me, it comes down to I mean when I'm at the restaurant and I'm waiting on tables and people would say, Oh, you're a long way from home. What are you doing in England? And I will say, I'm a PhD student or I'm doing my PhD at the university. I'm very proud to say it then because it changes the way they see me. Automatically, I'm serving them. I'm waiting on them. I'm second class citizen you know I'm not nearly as important as them … But then the minute that I said I'm doing a PhD, I just out educated them. And so then it's Oh, good for you. And then when I add to it that it's in special education, that makes me even more you know I'm a kind-hearted person for working with those special kids you know. And it totally changes their opinions of me within seconds, but yea, when I meet men or if I'm out at a pub or if you know I'm on a date, I act like I'm here doing research for work. I've very rarely said, Oh I'm a research student. I would say, I'm doing research at the university in special education, disabilities and kids with special needs. They think it's a job. And it's not until I go on a several dates with them that I clarify, No, I actually work a job at a restaurant to make money to pay my bills because I don't get paid to do this research. I'm still classified as a student. … it's weird how I would use this student identity when it's convenient for me. … And then when it's not, I hide it.

> Scarlett, third interview on 23rd April 2012.

Scarlett brought up situations where she utilised her title in different ways to present herself in front of different groups of people. She seemed to have the need to demonstrate the self as a competent person with high moral and ideal. Moreover, it appeared that she felt necessary to present herself as a person who had a proper profession. This was similar to the concerns brought up by Karl and Denise who considered themselves mature and responsible and would like to be recognised by others this way. Karl also shifted his identities. In his case, when the situation seemed to provide advantages, he utilised the identity that benefited him.

> As soon as it comes to getting concessions for concerts or museums or whatever, I'm a student of course, but no, I don't see myself as a student. There's a difference between postgraduate and the other people running around here.

> Karl's third interview on 14th March 2012.

Identity shifts took place in Scarlett and Karl's cases when it worked to their advantage hence. Identities were situational and were not a fixed matter. Whereas Karl needed the 'student' role for 'concessions', Scarlett occasionally needed it for self-cognition, a profound admission concerning how she recognised herself and how she would like to be recognised.

Compared to Scarlett, Karl, and Denise, who regarded self highly as 'researchers' and emphasised strongly what they did, there was a group of participants who tended to adhere to the identity as simple as a Ph.D. student.

> To be honest, student makes me feel better. I mean the word "researcher" I don't know of course I'm researching, but I am a student. I mean when they ask me, What do you do in the UK? I am saying, I am a student. I don't say researcher. I think student for some reasons describes me better.

> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

To be honest, maybe because I am younger and you know I feel more a student than I don't know anything else. And maybe I want to stay young I don't know say to others I'm still a student.

<div align="right">Bob's third interview on 8th April 2012.</div>

Sophie and Bob preferred 'student'. It seemed that their preference stemmed from the emphases they placed on 'learning' and 'learning how to do research'. Again, such an identity was constructed based on what they did rather than who they were.

Bob pointed out a reason to justify his use of 'student', especially in social occasions.

I am just thinking it from a practical view, so I would rather to say to people who don't know about this stuff that I am a PhD student to get rid of more questions, questions that answers would not be understand.

<div align="right">Bob's third interview on 8th April 2012.</div>

Bob utilised the role of 'student' to avoid more questions. It appeared that his experiences suggested that describing himself as 'a Ph.D. researcher' was confusing for some. People outside of the academic context seemed to be confused by whether or not 'a researcher' was a profession, whereas 'a student' clarified their understanding and the identity of the participant. Bob's experiences resonated with Scarlett's encounters where she had to explain further the differences between 'Ph.D. researcher', 'Ph.D. student', and 'researcher'.

This group of participants emphasised the journey of learning as consisting of elements of uncertainty and acceptance. They appeared to show that they recognised the need to deal with contingent challenges along the curve of the learning journey. To these participants, 'learning' defined their academic experiences.

This section revealed that identities shifted and were situational. My participants tended to emphasise what they did rather than who they were. Those who were comfortable with the role of student seemed to be calm and accepting and did not demonstrate issues in identity presentation. On the other hand, those who experienced shifts suggest the need for self-cognition, encountering issues in identity presentation, and entitlement to benefits are elements attached to the role of student. Among those who experienced shifts, the need for self-cognition and entitlement to benefits emerged as primary motivations to describe different layers of themselves and for identity shifts.

4.2. Supervisory Issues

My participants, coming from different academic, professional, and cultural backgrounds, were like other doctoral students who commonly reflect on the importance of their supervisor's guidance and support when articulating their learning experiences. This part reports findings derived from my participants' supervisory experiences. Roles of the supervisor, interpersonal relationships between the student and the supervisor, the change of a supervisor, and the availability of a supervisor were salient themes.

4.2.1. Supervisor's Roles

Each of my participants shared with me their perceptions of the supervisor. How they viewed the supervisor and the entailed responsibilities helped demonstrate their expectations in supervisor's roles.

Jiyeon had postgraduate education experience in Korea. She started a master's degree, but never completed it. She commented on the different relationships she had with the supervisors in Korea and in the UK.

> It was … ok compared to here, it was so hierarchical. It is … He is the gold. He said something, you do it. He said this theory is right, it's right.

> Jiyeon's first interview on 5th July 2011.

In Jiyeon's experience there seemed to be a strong sense of social hierarchy in the higher education in the Korean context. Based on Jiyeon's postgraduate education experience in Korea, the supervisor had the power in the student-supervisor relationship. This created power struggle. She was very grateful that in the UK the experience was not as imbalanced. She felt that both her supervisor and her were academics. They were 'equal'. The only difference she perceived between herself and her supervisor was that she was in the process of doing her Ph.D. and that the supervisor was there to supervise her and to facilitate the process. Moreover, Jiyeon felt that her supervisor's role involved being a mentor who supported her with any personal challenges as well as an adviser who guided her progress to ensure she remained on the right track. Support of this sort allowed her to feel that her supervisor was being 'supportive', 'patient', and had 'confidence' in her.

Karl felt that in the UK the situation was more relaxed and that he could address his supervisor by his first name. However, he remarked that in Germany first names were rarely used in professional relationships.

> If you come new into the university just to do your degree, you would always be more distant to your supervisor because he's just at a higher educational level. He's

the boss and you have a certain distance to your boss in Germany. It's just a common thing.

<div align="right">Karl's first interview on September 6th 2011.</div>

In Germany, higher education level increased social distance in social interactions. The supervisor, hence, was seen as the boss with whom students should attempt to approach in a professional manner. There was also a social hierarchy in the German context. While Karl preferred the less formal supervisor role in UK, he did not consider it appropriate for the supervisor to also have the role of 'friend'.

> I think there's must be this difference in position between supervisee and supervisor. It shouldn't be too close in my opinion because then it tends to be that no one wants to say anything bad about the other, but sometimes, a good argument is the good base for new ideas. … I mean, we are all grown-ups and we're all at the point where we want to be independent and everything, but then it's good to have someone like the supervisor who can still show you the direction if you are stuck. It's great to be work on your own, to be completely independent, but some general directors quite helpful. Otherwise, you get lost.

Karl's fourth interview on June 8th 2012.

Karl considered that friendship between the student and supervisor would compromise the necessary feedback that is vital to a successful supervision and professional relationship. In this setting, he intended to keep a friendly and professional relationship without forming a friendship with his supervisor.

Sophie and Bob also brought up the 'power' differential between the student and supervisor. In Cyprus and in Greece, one's supervisor was highly respected, which required strict and official means of communication. By comparison, they

both valued the friendly interaction style they received from their current supervisor in the UK.

Similar to Jiyeon's Korean and Karl's German experiences, Dora's experience, in this sense, with the Cypriot and Greek higher education system, also resulted in a social distance between the student and supervisor. Also, in Dora's opinion, the role of the supervisor could exert a strong cultural influence.

> To me, supervisor is somebody like a godfather or godmother. … Sacred people. … Yea, he has to I think in my culture we are more used to having the teacher or the supervisor being more in charge of things. If he's supervising my dissertation, for example, he would be doing most of the jobs. I will ask him to give me the references for example. He would be doing most of the job for me. … even the grammar thing.

> Dora's first interview on 26th August 2011.

In Dora's culture the role of supervisor was similar to the role of a 'godfather' or 'godmother'. A person in the role of supervisor would provide support, guidance, and help. Moreover, a person in that role has the power to instruct and control. In Cyprus and Greece students depend on the supervisor for sources, information, and authority. In Dora's home context the supervisor had more responsibility than the student to ensure the completion of the study. Dora saw this dynamic between supervisor and student as positive and necessary.

Social hierarchy, along with power, emerged to characterise some participants' perception with regard to the supervisor's role in their home contexts. Based on their learning experiences, supervisors had to be an educator who had expertise in the respective field, who could provide constructive feedback, and who could encourage and motivate the Ph.D. progress. There was also an implication of requiring the supervisor to attend to students' personal situations.

4.2.2. Student-Supervisor Relationship

There were different kinds of expectations regarding interpersonal relationships between the doctoral students and their supervisors. My participants, based on their learning, working, and communication experiences, revealed what they thought about this close relationship that played an important role in their doctoral education journey.

'Friendly' and 'professional' were the most identifiable adjectives my participants utilised to describe their relationships with the supervisor. However, each of my participants had unique situations and different views about such friendly and professional relationships. Bob did not mind being friendly, but thought for the time being a friendly relationship was the best. He did not consider it appropriate to form friendship with the supervisor.

> It's very good. I mean we are not friends, but … I don't think that we are supposed to be friends because she is my supervisor and I am her student. He is supposed to be my mentor, so I have to respect him. I cannot go out with her and drink some pints.

> Bob's first interview on 11th October 2011.

> But I think that after my PhD when I get the title, maybe we can be friends. I think that is supposed to be in my mind. I have to achieve something to get her respect.

> Bob's first interview on 11th October 2011.

Bob seemed to consider that it was important for him to earn respect from his supervisor. The way that could help him achieve so would be obtaining the

doctorate. Bob's comments were interesting. On the one hand, he seemed to think 'friendship' was not appropriate. On the other hand, he seemed to have an intention to seek it, perhaps, in the future.

Mr. T's case was unusual in that his student-supervisor relationship melded both professional and friendship interaction. Due to his Ph.D., Mr. T had several supervisors from the university and the research centre where his designs were undergoing experiments. He considered the supervisor from the university most helpful.

> But as a whole, I mean my supervisor from the university knows the best of all. I mean he's a really nice guy. I think I was lucky that I have him. … I mean I know people that don't have the relationship that I have with the supervisor because with other one I don't have the same relationship. I mean with the supervisor from university we have gone out drinking, we watch games, you know we do things once in a while. … you know we share many things. We got along in many things.
>
> Mr. T's third interview on 19th February 2012

It seemed that the supervisor's expertise and their common interests grounded their close relationship. The point was in the professional part that the quality of supervision had been maintained. Neither Mr. T nor his supervisor were confused by the friendship. Moreover, their friendship did not appear to compromise the quality of Mr. T's work nor the supervisor's feedback and guidance.

Jiyeon worked with her primary supervisor only. She felt that they had a great relationship that could be described as 'comfortable' and 'close', which seemed to mitigate the human qualities rather than being 'clinical' aspect of their communication and interaction. Jiyeon also reflected on her experience as a supervisor to her students. She felt there was a line separating the students and the supervisor and it did not seem to be comfortable for the students and the supervisor to step over boundaries.

I mean my supervisor and I yes I go to her office meeting. We're not chatting. We're not friends. We're talking about work, but then when I see her out of office you know go for a pint, yes, we do talk about other things. But again, I'm very conscious that she is my supervisor and still I can't you know I can't talk to her like I'm just talking to another friend in the pub. It's not the same. But I think it's more relaxed my supervisor than being just supervisor. And actually spending personal time with her, I quite enjoy that. Em and in some ways, I think it motivates me and that's the thing. When you become closer, personally closer with the person, I think that says a lot about I mean why do people get close. It's because they can relate to each other. It's because they have a basic sort of respect and understanding on each other as well. And if that happens in a teacher-student relationship or a supervisor-supervisee relationship, I don't see anything wrong with that necessarily. That's the thing. If I had another supervisor, I could see him just as a supervisor. I wouldn't have any problems with that. But in this case, in my case at the moment, eh em I've managed to kind of create a relationship with her and I think that's fine.

Jiyeon's fourth interview on August 12th 2012.

Jiyeon's current relationship with the supervisor was very professional and friendly. Even though they spent time together outside of the academic context, Jiyeon was very aware of her role as a student and her supervisor's role as a supervisor. She felt that they became closer gradually, but that developing a legitimate friendship a longer period of time to accomplish. In this sense, Jiyeon and Bob shared very similar experiences concerning their relationships with their supervisors, thoughts about the possibility o forming a friendship with their supervisor in the future, particularly after the completion of their Ph.D.s.

In Karl's case, differences in terms of the embedded restrictions in the interpersonal relationships that are reflected I the German language become a factor in the development of his relationship with his supervisor. In German, there are two words for 'you': 'Sie' and 'Du'. Using 'Sie' showed respect to people in a

higher level, while using 'Du' suggested equal relationships. The question regarding the use of the familiar or formal address demonstrates the nature of the restrictions and distances that can exist in interpersonal relationships between the student and supervisor.

> I didn't really mind. It's ok because I think there is still respect, while in Germany, once you're on the "Du' level, the bit of the respect is gone. The distance is just gone. I think that's not very helpful in the professional relationship.

> Karl's first interview on September 6th 2011.

It was very interesting to learn that Karl was unable to address his supervisors in Germany using their first names or 'Du', but that he was able to address his supervisor in the UK using the first name without feeling disrespectful and hindering the student-supervisor relationship. Language seemed to bound his identities and his student-supervisor relationship.

Karl's professional and friendly student-supervisor relationship encountered an unexpected change, in Karl's opinion, at a later stage of his doctoral journey. Karl felt that he had not developed enough compared to his first year. As a result, he needed guidance and help.

> It was quite productive because we tried to pinpoint the reasons and tried to figure out how we could improve our work together and how he could push me more to get more results because if I don't have pressure, I don't work at all. Since then, he keeps coming to my office, "How's it going?" "What are you doing?" stuff like that, which really helps. So, there's really this constant urge to write something to do something so that next time when he shows up, you can show him something new, which I have never had before.

> Karl's 4th interview on June 8th 2012.

In Karl's case, a change in the student-supervisor relationship emerged to become significant. He felt that he went from being very autonomous and independent to needing more evaluation, motivation, and examination provided by his supervisor. He felt that he could work better and more efficiently with such kinds of pressure. He desired that his supervisor take on a more traditional teacher's role in order to improve, motivate, and to monitor his progress. He became more like a 'student' who needed more guidance. His interpersonal relationship with the supervisor shifted from student-supervisor to student-teacher.

Among all of my participants, Scarlett encountered the most issues involving her progress and interpersonal relationships with the supervisor. Scarlett's supervisory experience exemplified, from a negative point of view, the importance of the supervisor in the student's identity development and thesis progression.

> He's just horrible. He's not a mentor. He does not have mentoring bone in his body. He's very domineering. He's very self-absorbed and you know my research is the most important thing ever and if you even want me to talk to you like you are an equal then you know … it's terrible. … I think we have one meeting in the almost two years he's been my supervisor where he has said, Well done. Good job. Everything else was just No, No, No, No, No. this is not that is not. Do this. Write this. Do this. Read this book. Write this. And not in a it's a do it because I'm telling you to do it. That's my way and that's gonna get you pass it.

<div align="right">Scarlett's first interview on 7th September 2011.</div>

> This isn't Demitri's Ph.D.. It's mine. So I'm just em I think academically speaking, I'm absolutely my worst nightmare now. Absolutely my own worst nightmare. I em I've just lost heart. I've lost faith. I've lost confidence. I've lost really any kind of will to pick it up and start working on it again.

<div align="right">Scarlett's first interview on 7th September 2011.</div>

There were a combination of issues that characterised Scarlett's student-supervisor relationship including struggles over power and authority and Scarlett's need for positive and constructive feedback that she felt was missing from the relationship. Power, authority, and the need for positive and constructive feedback Because of her issues with her supervisor, Scarlett often felt disempowered and too discouraged to work on her study. She was in a state of loss and felt that she was unable to recognise or receive guidance. It was not likely, in Scarlett's view, that she was capable of continuing her Ph.D. without professional and positive support from her supervisor.

Dimitri is gonna stay on as my primary supervisor because he feels like I brought the study back into his area of interests and Mary is gone on maternity leave, so she's definitely gone. They're supposedly gonna find me another supervisor this week, but I don't know. I don't know. And you and I talked about me being proactive emailing candidates saying oh I'd like to work with you you know can you would you be interested in this project and so on and so forth? Em I just didn't feel I wanted to even do that. Em I just thought it would be a waste of my time. I thought it would be a waste of time. It would turned out to be a big disappointment. … And I also feel like it's not just my responsibility. I didn't do anything wrong. Em you know they decided to drop me. Mary got pregnant and I just felt it's the university's responsibility to have to replace them. Not me. Em but I think ultimately you know Linda brought a good point one night that it's more about if I … if I found somebody to supervise and they agreed to do it, then I would have no one left to blame for not doing my work. … I couldn't blame the supervision any more because it would be someone I have picked. Hahaha so it would then be looking at the mirror you know looking myself in the mirror only have to answer to myself for not getting the work done. And she said that obviously I'm not willing to do that yet. It's still easy for me to blame it on the university and their negligence so and so had quit and so and so doesn't want to work with me you know rather than me face the fact that I haven't done anything and it's my fault.

Our last interview confirmed that conflicts were still interfering with Scarlett's learning experiences. Scarlett's primary supervisor had been indecisive in terms of whether or not he wanted to remain in the position of being her supervisor. His indecision had a negative effect on Scarlett's development and progress. In fact, his vacillation deconstructed trust in their student-supervisor relationship. Moreover, Scarlett appeared to feel less confident and have less faith in herself as a competent individual and a student. In addition, Scarlett felt that it was the university's responsibility and not hers, to find a secondary supervisor when she learned that the secondary supervisor would be on a maternity leave. Despite the fact that Scarlett recognised her responsibility to be a student who should produce quality work, she seemed to have different thoughts about assuming her agentic power and authority regarding her troubles with ensuing that she received proper supervision. In this sense, Scarlett showed low academic autonomy, which did not evolve or improve when her supervisor's indecisiveness was causing problems. This raises the question of whether universities have policies that assume students are able to function regardless of barriers or set back without feeling demoralised or even bullied?

Scarlett did not receive any accommodations based on her situation as a student. Because of this it was difficult for her study to show development. Instead of taking the win-win perspective that could have lead her to recognise her responsibility to invest time and energy in order to resolve her situation, Scarlett's doctoral education journey seemed to be 'lost in the sea of negativity'. She felt strongly that she was losing control over her study. She seemed to lose authority and power all together. Such a sense of loss might explain her reluctant and pessimistic attitudes towards her own research. Her academic identity, in this sense, seemed to be absent in the process of this educational pursuit.

Most of my participants reported having a professional and friendly student-supervisor relationship. They felt that their supervisors had provided appropriate

and necessary support, guidance, and feedback. Positive relationships seemed to have helped ensure these students' academic development. In addition, the need for personal care and a closer relationship emerged from my participants' experiences, suggesting that they, in fact, sought something both professional and personal from their student-supervisor relationships. The supervisors who displayed personal care were described and considered by participants as creating a student-supervisor relationship that had higher levels of personal interaction and friendship, while those who focused more on the thesis progress were more likely to be perceived by participants as being clinical. This clinical relationship appeared to suggest distance between the Ph.D. student and the supervisor. It also implied, from some participants' perspective, a means through which to receive efficient and effective guidance and direction when the clinical supervisor more closely emulates the role of a teacher.

4.2.3. Supervisory Change

Half of my participants experienced a change of supervisor. Some experienced it more than once in their doctoral education journey. They shared with me their perceptions of supervisory change and how such an experience influenced their identities.

Among my eight participants, Bob, Denise, Karl, and Mr. T worked with the same supervisors from the beginning of their doctoral education journey and throughout. Jiyeon, Sophie, Scarlett and Dora experienced changes of supervisor. Dora described the first supervisor she had and reflected on her needs for direction in her doctoral journey.

> I spent one year with her. She didn't give me any help or support. She forced me to do this XYZ modules. I was not because I was under three year PhD, I was not supposed to do all the modules, but just because she was lazy. She didn't want to spend much time with me. She said that I had to do all the modules, then I didn't see

her for maybe 6 months. … she said to me it's very essential. I wouldn't have done my PhD if I don't do them and the study requirement of the university blah blah blah then I spent nearly one year on that for nothing. And then that's when I asked for a change of supervisor. I was devastated.

Dora's first interview on 26th August 2011.

Dora had very strong feelings towards her experiences with her first supervisor. The supervisor's recommendations concerning what Dora needed to do in order to complete her study and Dora's perceptions of being a direct entry, Ph.D. students who did not need to take any taught courses, created conflict. There was a gap between Dora and her supervisor's opinions of the need to take those modules. In fact, their ways of seeing those modules were on two ends of a continuum between 'necessary' and 'unnecessary'. There was a sense of defence of Dora's being a competent Ph.D. student. Moreover, the six-month long disconnection suggested a lack of continual communication and guidance. Together, these might have explained her feeling being 'forced' rather than 'suggested' to take courses to enhance her knowledge and skills for her progress. In the end, Dora felt that her supervisor was being 'lazy' with his advice and decided to apply for a change of supervisor. It seemed that despite being independent, Dora still expected and needed support and guidance. Not getting the needed academic and emotional support destabilised her identities and provoked her need to change the situation to a more desirable direction. In Dora's opinion, her new supervisor was very supportive and understanding. He had been to Syria and understood the culture. They communicated with each other regularly and that increased her comfort level and level of assurance in her progress. In Dora case, her relatively negative supervisory experiences in the past led her to become careful and cautious in her working relationship with current supervisor.

Sophie experienced a supervisory change. Sophie's supervisor came from Greece. They spoke Greek to each other in the supervisory meetings. This way, Sophie felt reassured and understood. Nevertheless, the supervisor decided to

resign from the position and leave UK. Sophie felt 'devastated' and worried about how the working relationship with the new supervisor would be different.

> With the first one, it was perfect. I mean I totally understand and all of our meetings were very productive. And then I was worried about how it is going with the new one. Thank god, it's going so well.
>
> Sophie's second interview on October 27th 2011.

Sophie felt a great relief that her working relationship was good. In this way, Sophie's being was not destabilised, and her study could be enhanced and progress properly.

While some students found a supervisor helpful and supportive, others thought about the supervisor differently. In the beginning of their doctoral journey, Sophie and Scarlett had the same supervisor. Scarlett claimed that she was not informed by the supervisor or the university that the supervisor had resigned and was not working at the university any more. She did not learn about it until she received an email from the supervisor who explained the situation to her, after her many emails attached with some writings asking for feedback. That experience made her feel neglected and disrespectful.

In Jiyeon's situation, she experienced two changes of supervisor. The first change took place in the beginning of her doctoral journey. She had worked with this supervisor in the previous year for her master's degree. It was a very positive and productive experience. Before the supervisor left for a position in another university, the supervisor helped her to locate a new one. Being confident and independent, Jiyeon still felt that it was a shame that she could no longer work together with that supervisor. Although she felt very supportive working with the new supervisor, the interpersonal relationship was less personally close in her opinion. During the course of our interviews, Jiyeon was working with her second primary supervisor. In our last interview when Jiyeon came back from Korea, she

learned that the supervisor was going to leave the university. She needed to find a new supervisor to work with for the third time. Similar to the previous time, she was encouraged to remain involved in the process of locating the new supervisor. As she had gained more familiarity with the faculty, she felt more confident this time to identify the one that could help her complete the doctoral education journey.

There were different reasons that could lead to a change of supervisor. It could be the career decision of the supervisor that necessitated a change in location. It could be the mismatching chemistry between the student and the supervisor. Concerning the requirements in the Ph.D. process and communication, it It could also be the differences within expectations and/or perceptions about responsibilities of the student and the supervisor.

One would think that working with the same supervisor would produce a relatively stable – whether positive or negative -- working situation. My participants' experiences support this theory with one exception. The degree of the availability of the supervisor proved to be a great source of potential instability.

4.2.4. Availability of Supervision

Availability of the supervisor can be defined as the ability to respond to the students' needs in a timely manner. Such availability could be demonstrated in written or verbal form. In particular, Denise's experience became a salient case of the need for acceptable availability of the supervision.

Denise's supervisor lived and worked in Australia. In her case, there was a physical distance in terms of time and space between her and the supervisor.

> He's working in Sydney University now, so I have to be patient. So I don't know what he thinks about my progress after December and what he thinks of this chapter, which is finished for me. … I have moved on to the next chapter without knowing

what he thinks about the other one you know the previous one. But before that yes, it's always been satisfied, but now I'm getting a little bit more nervous because it's my third year and it's the last term of the third year, so naturally I'm worrying about time you know.

<div align="right">Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.</div>

It appeared that Denise was not able to receive timely feedback and had to be proactive by continuing her work without feedback, guidance, and advice. In this sense, she was in a passive situation but with an active attitude. Previous experiences the feedback from her supervisor provided her with some level of confidence while the long wait kept her in an uncertain position. When time became an emergent issue in Denise's case, she had no power to accelerate her Ph.D. progression. She was in a less advantageous position because of her intention to finish the study sooner but her inability to do so because of the lack of availability of her supervisor.

I mean it's really difficult all the distance and the time even night and day and summer and winter it's upside down you know we are having winter and they're having summer holiday. It's really hard, but still he agreed, so I have to be a little bit patient. The school agreed as well. It's adding to my pressure to be honest to my worries and everything because he could have been a bit more quicker than you know more efficient than what we are doing if he was sitting in the office in the department where I can once a week knock on his door you know. I know that. It's adding to my overall pressure and sometimes it's stressful, but still I have to cope with it. I have to be patient because I simply don't have an alternative.

<div align="right">Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.</div>

Time and space were critical elements in Denise's doctoral education. It was not easy for her to talk to the supervisor, as the supervisor was literally not nearby and

there was a time difference to consider. She could only remind herself to be patient. This situation created within her a strong sense of helplessness.

Denise's case provided a different perspective to view the availability of the supervisor. Rather than arguing for receiving feedback and advice in a timely manner, time and distance emerged to become critical factors that could influence availability of the supervision and the needed support.

This section demonstrated my findings concerning supervisory issues. Most of my participants were highly aware of the cultural differences between the home and the UK contexts. Some appreciated the differences, whereas some considered the differences less valuable. A cultural element was found embedded in my participants' perceptions of learning, studying, and supervisor's roles, which influenced, to different degrees, their working and interpersonal relationships with the supervisor. Most participants seemed to be able to recognise different patterns and adapt to the situations both actively and coercively. Many were able to construct hybrid ways of viewing self, study, responsibility, and relationships with the supervisor. However, feeling lost in the in-between state was also a salient feature in my participants' situations. Such diverse experiences gave rise to hybrid learning experiences and identities

In conclusion, being autonomous, receiving positive guidance and support, and timely feedback helped my participants to integrate differences and constructed ways that suited their studies. My participants had different experiences and cultural views about the study and the student-supervisor relationship. Some wanted the relationship to be professional, whereas some wanted the relationship to be closer. Most of them preferred a relationship that was personal with a professional element. Some highly emphasised their students' responsibilities, whereas some required more direction. My participants had many roles in addition to being Ph.D. students. They were at the same time friends and children, for instance. The following section reports my participants' relationships with family members, friends, and social circles. Their social identities in relation to

self, others, and the environment were articulated to exemplify their identity evolution.

4.3. Socio-Economic Factors and Social Identities

Social identities involved those closely related to family and social relations. Social identities demonstrated relations and functioned as support systems. On the one hand, they provided familiarity and equilibrium; on the other, they became salient issues to destabilise my participants' identities. Themes that emerged included home country situations, financial issues, relationships with the spouses and family members, and social life and friendship.

4.3.1. Impact of Home on the Student

In this study, home was not a fixed concept to my participants. Home had a shifting and a temporary nature in some cases. Being in a different context seemed to influence family relationships. The concept concerning overseas doctoral students must include a discussion without about trips to visit home, which was not a simple matter for some, as distance and cost could shape access and availability to home.

Bob and Mr. T tended to be home with family and friends on traditional Greek holidays. Karl chose to visit home in Germany for Christmas not because of religious reasons but because it was a common holiday season that his family members were available to get together. Half of Sophie's second year was spent in Cyprus where she took a break and collected data. In these cases, identities as a child, sibling and a friend to family and friends back home were strengthened by regular visits.

Some overseas doctoral students came from countries experiencing upheaval during their time in the UK. Dora came from Syria and her regular trips to visit home became very problematic beginning in 2011, which marked the beginning of the second half of her Ph.D. journey. Besides complicating her ability to return home for visits, the political upheaval in Syria pushed Dora to re-evaluate her thoughts and feelings about her home country. She resisted the re-conceptualisation and refused to believe the negative portrayal of her country, Syria, in the UK media.

Home to overseas doctoral students, in my study, oftentimes became one of the key survival strategies. My participants experienced formation of different worldviews and mindsets due to estrangement from their home country. Interestingly, among my participants, those who had financial aid appeared to have opportunities to visit home more regularly. When financial limitations prevented visits home, as was frequently the case with participants who did not have financial aids, the benefits others received when visiting home were sought alternatively at a local level where their success was not guaranteed. For students unable to secure frequency or consistent visits home, a different mindset was developed to enable their survival in different circumstances.

4.3.2. Financial Issues

Tuition fees, living expenses, and transportation fares were the most common components of overseas doctoral students' expenses. Without proper financial aid, it would have been impossible for my participants to embark on the doctoral journey let alone complete the process.

For those who were restricted by their financial situations such as Scarlett and Denise, they needed to work to, first of all, to sponsor their everyday life, and secondly, to save up in order to have enough funds to visit home and, as such, their trips to visit home were not regularly. In this sense, they were constantly

worried about having enough income to survive. A lack of a regular and stable income destabilised Scarlett and Denise's beings. They sometimes felt incompetent as an adult individual.

Having financial aid did not lead my participants to spend without plans. Given the high cost of travelling, my participants had different ways to decide how the money available to them would be utilised and spent. Jiyeon, for example, was very candid about how she spent the money. She could travel home in Korea to visit family and friends or she could also use the fare to travel to other destinations, given that a fare to South Korea could easily cost 700 pounds. Limited financial resources demanded that she make choices. A cautious attitude towards their financial situations was also seen in my participants coming from Europe. Sophie's home country was a popular holiday destination and the ticket home would not be cheap. Nevertheless, she considered it money well spent, as she could home. Karl always tried to find a low rate for his flight back home, because, in so doing, he could save money for other purposes such as going to conferences.

Financial situations appeared to influence my participants' identities. For financially secured participants, their identities were strengthened regularly by regular trips home. They also had the liberty to decide how to use their resources. For those who had financial issues, the availability of visits home fluctuated. Family and friends back home became a destination that was not available regularly or easily.

4.3.3. Relationships, Family, and Marriage

My participants' relationships, family, and marriages played an important role in sustaining them through the Ph.D. process and thus, were integral to their identity evolution. Relationships with friends, parents, and spouses encountered were transformed while being overseas. As a different outlook on life and individual development could be encouraged by re-socialisation opportunities, my

participants were provided with limitless social practices and a myriad of social circles to experience differences. They could establish new ways to consider their lives.

4.3.3.1. Work Outweighed Relationship

Some of my participants were single and a few of them were involved in intimate relationships. Some had stable relationships, whereas others experienced relationship discord. The relationships seemed to have varying levels of influence on my participants' identities.

Among my participants who were in relationships, Bob and Mr. T had very stable girlfriends. Their relationships started before our interviews began and remained stable throughout our interviews. Further, both Bob and Mr. T continued their relationships after our interviews were completed. On the other hand, some of my participants examined their relationships and decided to focus on study. Such a decision changed their relationships. Dora's experience was an example.

Dora got engaged when she was in Syria, but she had to come to the university to study only ten days after her engagement. Her fiancé remained in Syria.

> During my first academic year in Exeter and my ex-fiancé was a bit jealous. He was too jealous that he would not allow me to socialise at all. He was like I had to speak with him everyday. I wanted to. I'm not saying that I don't want to speak with him. But, he always asked me what did you do? Who did you meet with? And these questions, which were very weird to me. But, I was all the time thinking, ok, I would not make trouble. I would be just as good as I can and just make him because I didn't want him to upset.

Dora's first interview on August 26th 2011.

Even though Dora sensed issues in her relationship, she felt that she should not upset her fiancé. To limit discord, she followed his requests and did not have an active social life. Dora in this sense attempted to keep the relationship in a peaceful situation based on her perception of the relationship. However, over time she developed different thoughts and feelings towards this relationship. Three months after their engagement, Dora decided to end her relationship.

> Because it didn't work at all and I was really miserable. And I had so many pressures in my studies. He was just pressurising on me. He was all the time pushing me to go to Syria for a holiday. … I was really, really under huge pressure from my study and I couldn't tolerate having another emotional pressure.

Dora's first interview on August 26th 2011.

Dora chose to focus on her work, in this case, her Ph.D. study, rather than on the relationship. As the relationship did not bring her comfort but stress, she had to make her choice. She reflected on the journey and felt that the choice was made based on her recognition of the priority in her life, which was her Ph.D.

> Maybe I just prioritised my academic life on my personal because I was not happy with him. And really, I don't remember much because for me it ended at that time. I mean three months it was really over and then maybe at that time I realised that I should not because I think I got engaged because I wasn't feeling maybe this lonely thing. I am trying to think now. I'm reflecting back now when I came to Warwick. So, sometimes feeling lonely pushed you to be with someone. Then you realised that no we are not that close. You need someone to fill this gap. And that's it. For me I think it was it was the case because I could end it in a text and not even think about him afterwards. I was so busy with my work. It was not easy. I am not that hard. I am a very sensitive person, but I think I was so sad with him. I was suffering.

Dora's decision was justified by her reflection on why she should end the relationship. Her reflection helped her to understand that she was feeling lonely. She recognised that loneliness misled her to be part of a relationship. She felt reassured by her reflection, as she formed a deeper understanding about herself in such situations.

4.3.3.2. Shifted Relationships with Parents

Perception of home was often connected with perceptions of family. Such relationships varied as one's relationships could involve members from parents to siblings to relatives. In Sophie's case, her parents had overseas education experiences at the doctoral level in United States when they were young. During our interviews, Sophie experienced shifts in terms of her relationship with her parents.

To Sophie, her parents understood the stress and difficulties for a Ph.D. student who was pursuing education overseas. She also described that her parents knew her situation quite well.

> They were studying for lots and lots of years. Both of them. They have Ph.D. We have similar lives. When they were in my age, they were in the same position as I am right now.

Sophie's first interview on 13th July 2011

One would think that this could be a very helpful condition because Sophie was new to the Ph.D. study and could use some suggestions and advice from her

parents. They identified with each other as persons who had pursued doctoral education overseas. However, there were challenges that led Sophie is uneasy feeling about their relationship.

> Both of them they're totally quantitative study. You know the first time I showed my dad some transcription of my observations, he was like this, *What is this?* I said, *It's my raw data. And this thing will give you results?* This thing is like the kids did that and that and the teacher said that. So, it's not that they can actually help me because they're so scientific. … My study is qualitative and social construction and stuff like that.

> Sophie's first interview on 13th July 2011

It seemed that different disciplines could explain the methodological discrepancies between Sophie and her parents. Her parents studied mathematics and civil engineering, which emphasised objectivity, scientific approaches, and quantitative methods, whereas Sophie's research was qualitative and concerned social construction that highlighted subjectivity and questioned positivist ways of thinking and doing things. Sophie and her Ph.D. veteran parents had discussions about her research nature, methods, and data. Their relationships in this way were no longer those of child and parent, instead a peer-researcher relationship emerged.

> I don't think they understand my work. I decided I would stop talking with them about my research. Especially my father is too scientific and too quantitative. He cannot actually understand how I am analyzing the data now. So, it's a bit frustrating when I'm talking to him because he cannot understand what I'm actually doing. He asked me, Did you have meetings with your supervisors? I said yes. How did it go? What are you doing right now? I'm expecting doing the process of analyzing the data right now. Really? You are going to have findings analyzing it in this way? I was like, YEA. So, I decided it was the last time I would have this conversation with my dad. … My father mostly asks me about this. When I talk to

them on Skype, I just want to talk personal things like how he's doing and my brothers.

<div align="right">Sophie's second interview on 27th October 2011.</div>

It appeared that different paradigms led to a barrier between Sophie and her parents. Their newly constructed peer-researcher relationship had to come to an end in order for Sophie to restore the very needed support and help connected with parental care. It appeared that even when one assumed that parents could offer help based on similar experiences, there could be a gap not just due differences in age but also to differences in paradigms. In Sophie's case, the parents' experiences became a barrier leading her to feel even more pressured while working on her research. To deal with her destabilisation, Sophie decided to terminate her peer-researcher relationship and sought help and support from her parents via their parent-child relationship.

Sophie's case demonstrates how my participants' emotional equilibrium was closely connected to family. Shifts occurring in relations with family could destabilise identities given that 'family' was a source of strong support for students in the overseas doctoral education journey.

4.3.3.3. A Destabilised Wife Role and Individual Identity

Marriage developing overseas could undergo more complications because when the couple was developing under a different cultural context, more unexpected situations could take place. This section reports Jiyeon's experiences to show the impact of studying abroad on marriage.

Jiyeon's husband accompanied her to pursue postgraduate education overseas from 2008. Jiyeon acquired two master's degrees, worked as an English

language teacher and a full time doctoral student, whereas her husband had not yet passed the language requirement in order for him to receive an offer for higher education at the undergraduate level. As a couple, they did not get involved in the local Korean community, which according to Jiyeon, was centred on Christianity. The couple decided to keep a distance from the community in order to develop a life without having to encounter the cultural constraints embedded in the community. They aimed to develop independently. Jiyeon seemed reluctant to discuss her social life in Korea and in the UK. When asked to describe what their social life was like as a couple, Jiyeon was low-spirited.

> I was just thinking when I was really depressed a few weeks ago … thinking oh I haven't got a social life here. That's when I thought it would be the same in Korea because … you can't always have a buzzing social life. … I was just thinking you know it would be the same in Korea. It might even be worse knowing that you've got friends and family, but still being lonely. It's what a lot of people said to me as well when I tell them that you know I'm feeling down or you know I want to meet people or whatever. They said well you got a husband. You're living with someone. And I'm saying it's not the same.

> Jiyeon's first interview on 5th July 2011.

Jiyeon felt a sense of isolation from not having the kind of social life she desired. Also, she wrestled with the implication that suggested that she should have felt satisfied with her life because her husband was there with her. This led Jiyeon to live a life bound by couple-hood preventing her from having the space to develop relationships outside the marriage as an independent individual. As such, Jiyeon and her husband created a life as a couple, but herself as an individual seemed to be absent to both of them. In this way, Jiyeon's role of wife was more prominent among her identities than her role as an individual.

Compared to Jiyeon, her husband might have been the one who was even more isolated. He experienced a limited social life. While Jiyeon was identified by

various communities such as those in her doctoral education programme and in the language centre where she worked, her husband had fewer connections with local Korean people and other local groups. This discrepancy could explain why the couple's life was destabilised.

> In a way because that's the thing with our relationship, I was very restricted. … By myself and by my partner. Very restricted in terms of my social life. And it was strange because he thought I had too much and I thought I had too little. So, it was kind of quite it was a lot of tension involved regarding my social life

> Jiyeon's second interview on 18th October 2011.

Both Jiyeon and her husband noticed that one reason their marriage was destabilising was because of their social life; specifically, the difference between their perceptions of their social life. Jiyeon's culture partially contributed to her acceptance of a restricted social life wherein gender roles and power differentials were responsible for social imposition and conformity. Approximately one month before our second interview, Jiyeon decided to separate from her husband by asking him to leave UK and return to Korea. She then had the time and space to enjoy her social life the way she desired.

> It's just I've been really enjoying this past month while I get to spend time with my friends. I'm free to do that. I get to meet new people you know do whatever I feel like doing and yes that has played a part in it.

> Jiyeon's second interview on 18th October 2011.

When reflecting on how she had been, Jiyeon felt confident and cheerful. She remarked that she was 'freed' and 'liberated' from the restriction of her marriage. It appeared that she was empowered. Moreover, she noticed that she had formed different views and needed to plan her life differently. Jiyeon as an individual

emerged from a change in her situation. Nevertheless, the negative effect of deciding to have a divorce gradually emerged to affect her life and identities.

> I just can't at the moment. I don't feel like a teacher. Yes, I'm teaching. That is my job and I'm a Ph.D. student. Again, I don't feel like a Ph.D. student.

> Jiyeon's third interview on 3rd March 2012.

Gradually, Jiyeon experienced a serious identity crisis when she could not identify herself in relation to groups to which she had been connected. Jiyeon struggled to get through every day. She also felt 'guilty' for not delivering quality lessons by her standard.

Jiyeon having her Ph.D. did not distract her from feeling depressed because her relationship with her Ph.D. was not in an appropriate condition because of the destabilisation of her couple-hood status. In this setting, conflicts in relation to self, her everyday life, and her study became salient issues preventing her from feeling positive. There was a shift in Jiyeon's perception of the study-life divide.

> Because in a way everything else in my life is so unstable you know the Ph.D. yea I mean it's not easy, but it's something that is stable. Even if I don't speak to anyone, I can still do and work on my Ph.D. Even if I don't teach, that's something I can do.

> Jiyeon's third interview on 3rd March 2012.

> With the Ph.D., that's something that I have to do, which in a way it's good. I think. Because that is stable and it's something that I can look forward to in terms of well actually finish at some point hopefully by the deadline Because of that sort of that security the fact that it will finish at some point you know I think that's em that's what makes me perhaps relying on it in a good way. Because there is a target because there is an end point. Well, the rest of my life is sort of up in the air. I don't

know what's going to happen. With the Ph.D., I know. If I do the work, I am going to get the degree.

<div align="right">Jiyeon's third interview on 3rd March 2012.</div>

Study, in Jiyeon's case, evolved to be a stabilising force keeping her balanced and pushing her to move forward. Before she could work on her research, she needed to find her inner peace. To do so, Jiyeon went home to be with family and friends in Korea to receive needed emotional support. The trip empowered her. The change in her relationship destabilised Jiyeon's identities. When Jiyon gave up her wife role to pursue individuality, she decided to change regardless of the outcome. The support system, Jiyeon's parents and friends back home, helped her to deal with her identity crisis.

The following section continues to report the impact study overseas has upon the wider social worlds of the participants. It explores the social relations of the overseas doctoral students in the cross-cultural context.

4.3.4. Ambivalent Social Life and Friendship

My participants experienced 'relocation' when they left familiar social environment and began 're-socialisation' in different contexts. What seemed to emerge were different views of socialisation that underwent negotiation. The negotiating processes were demonstrated in fluid perceptions of friendship sought in the different context. This part reports on the impact of overseas education on social identities.

4.3.4.1. Fluid Perceptions of Friendship

There were different perceptions and ways to view friendship in the cross-cultural context. My participants reflected that it could be ordinary, different, and destabilising. Mr. T recounted that friendship had to do with the individual and not the origin of where he came from. In Sophie's opinion, friendship had to do with personality.

> There are always similarities and there are always difference. I think then you realize that if you can get along with the person, it's when the differences are not stronger than similarities. … Even sometimes that you feel oh my god I have too many cultural difference, you realized that maybe you just have two personal difference. It's not always a culture thing. Maybe it's the character thing. It's a personality thing. … Sometimes it's just the vibe you get from the person. It's the chemistry that you have with the person.

> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

> I don't know if there's a difference in actual friendship. I mean I think the premise is the same. I don't really know how to explain that. I don't. Is there any difference? The way I see friendships it's a very individual thing. I don't think it's a cultural thing. I don't feel it's like a cultural thing. … in terms of actual friendship, I'm doing the same practically the same thing here that I would be doing with my friends in Korea.

> Jiyeon's second interview on 18th October 2011.

Personality, personal traits and common ground transcended cultural differences in friendship for my participants. This way, friendship was sought in an interpersonal and not intercultural level.

Nevertheless, though my participants identified friendship more in the interpersonal than the intercultural levels, overseas education still was found to destabilise friendship patterns. This highlighted the influence of provisional and impermanent properties to friendship. The students often felt that, in addition to be endearing and permanent, friendships became fluid. Denise started to look at those closed ones around her and showed worries of losing them.

> I have one friend from my country here. There is very few from my country, just the two of us. She's finishing. Hopefully she'll successfully give her viva in a couple of weeks. In case she decides to go, I do have other friends, but they are getting less and less. I have another friend who is in the well second year like you, but in case she decides to go to Greece in her third year again kind of well my friends are getting less and less. There is social, but I don't know how it's gonna be in a few months.

> Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.

> It's a reminder that oh this one is going too, that one is going very soon. So, it's this feeling that nothing is stable. You are losing all the time you know your circle and you're not replacing them with new people most of the time.

> Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.

A sense of loss emerged from Denise's remarks. Friends and social circles were getting less and less in her case. It seemed that not having them around suggested losing them permanently. Moreover, what have been lost have not been replaced. In this setting, there was no newly established friendship after Denise felt comfortable about the current ones. Denise had not formed new friendship, and had not yet come up with ways to deal with such a sense of loss. On the other

hand, the implication was that she might prefer more solid, intimate, and intense relationships and expected them to be long lasting in a nearby area.

It seemed that there was sometimes an expectation that this would be a dynamic phase of life opening up all kinds of new social contacts, and for many it turned out to be very isolating. Similar to Denise, Dora also showed frustration owing to not being able to have more relationships with depth. However, she came up with ways to handle the sense of loss.

> So, what I have learned is that I need to be more open or understanding of others. Some people might not mean to be not in touch or away. Their life is just busy as well. … Yes, so I have a different understanding of certain relationship with people. I'm not gonna call them friendship, but people that I know. So, and I feel really good when I keep in touch with them although we are not like some of them are not being very close, but eh it's very important that this kind of socializing even if it is virtual like on-line, for example, Facebook or emails.

> Dora's fourth interview on 7th August 2012.

Dora seemed to be more used to substantial relationships. However, she had no preferences towards less connected ones. She learned from her own busy and preoccupied doctoral journey that sometimes people were simply too busy to keep in touch with each other. She became more accepting regarding friends having less frequent contact and having acquaintances, with whom one formed less intense relationships. She formed a hybridized way of socialisation.

On the other hand, some of my overseas students had different views that showed a sense of anticipation concerning less intense friendship and people's coming and going.

> You get that a lot. That's university life. I don't really care about that. … You can't maintain the circle of 500 friends. It just doesn't work. You have time for really

good friends and you stay in touch with them over distance and the others just can't do that. It's part of life.

<div align="right">Karl's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.</div>

Karl seemed composed in dealing with the impermanent relationships. He exhibited a firm attitude towards friendship and suggested that real friendship would not be held back by distance.

I mean people are coming and passing by you know this kind of stuff and PhD students stay, so we just don't open yourself so much. … because you know this guy came for a postgraduate. He will leave next year and you will stay here. What's the difference? … I think it's I have come about this just … I get used to it. I mean this is supposed to happen. You know it's my choice, so yea. … I don't feel sad because I made a choice. He made another choice. So, It's just the life.

<div align="right">Bob's fourth interview on 29th August 2012.</div>

You make friends with them. You are not going to be with them in your entire life. I make friends like I've only with them for two, three months because that's what is going to happen, so you cannot do anything about it. So you just meet them, you enjoy yourself. They enjoy themselves while they are around. And that's it.

<div align="right">Mr. T's fourth interview on 29th July</div>

Similar to Karl, Bob and Mr. T also treated impermanent friendship as a common practice in higher education. They pointed out the transient nature of friendship in postgraduate level especially for doctoral students. The difference was that they suggested that it was not necessary for them to invest too much emotion in the transient and provisional relationships.

This section showed the impact of studying abroad on social identities. In particular, it explores friendship and transient friendship. It shows that in a fixed manner, the students consider friendship transcends cultural differences and emphasises that friendship is defined at an interpersonal level instead of an intercultural level. Transient friendship becomes salient particular for students studying overseas. To face such a kind of friendship, students come up with different attitudes. Some accept different types of friendship and become more open. Some focus on friendship, without being destabilized by distance. Some develop a sense of self-protection, suggesting being reserved in terms of emotional investment.

4.3.4.2. Social Circles Sought in Different Context

My participants talked about activities in relation to social life. According to their accounts, there were a variety of social circles for them to form friendship and cultural norms and social codes were penetrated.

Overseas doctoral students were related to several different communities. Schools, work if they had a part time job, co-nationals, and other nationals were examples. This suggested that their social circles could involve flat mates, fellow colleagues, and friends. These individuals could be co-nationals and other nationals. In Denise's case, she remarked that her social circles were simple. She had flat mates from the first year of her doctoral education where she shared a flat with other students coming from different nationalities. They lived together and went out together. Another circle was her academic department. She got to meet colleagues when there were events. Denise came from Armenia and found out that there were very few Armenian students in the university. In fact, she only found one. However, Denise managed to know more people through the lead of this particular Armenian veteran Ph.D. student.

And I found another student here from Armenia, which is another part of the social life because she knows she is fourth year in the PhD and she know many different people in Exeter. She is very sociable, so she knows people even from completely different department, which I wouldn't otherwise interact with, but she knows these people. If we go out, I just suddenly know people talk to people I wouldn't talk otherwise.

Denise's first interview on 18th November 2011.

She reflected that it was an important component to her being to have another person from her cultural background. Denise felt that she interacted with her co-nationals differently compared to other people. She mentioned that it had to do with the cultural expectation that the senior ones would look after the younger ones. They shared with each other similar concepts and they kept an eye on each other in a sense.

Yea, you feel more though as a person she's good to interact with, but still I think the culture thing plays a role because the moment she knew I was new in Exeter two years ago, she was the older generation kind of she knew the city more, she thought as if it was her responsibility to advise me how to do things or if she knew something to inform me or to warn me you know because don't do this because I did and it was not good for example. She felt the responsibility and I feel the responsibility something is wrong going on her life to keep an eye all the time or to share.

Denise's first interview on 18th November 2011.

The co-national led Denise to expand life circles socially; they helped each other on everyday life matters physically; and, they supported each other psychologically. Flat mates, fellow colleagues from her department, and the co-national formed Denise's social circles, which also illustrated cultural expectations

in the role of co-nationals. In addition to the diversity embedded in social circles, a sense of familiarity and emotional support provided by co-nationals were identified as important to her life.

Jiyeon had a different view concerning reaching out to co-nationals. It was from her experiences before that led her to remain conservative when she interacted with other Korean people in the local context.

> When I've met Korean people here and we become close kind of because they want something. They always wanted something from me, whether it was help with their writing or whether it was with their English.

Jiyeon's third interview 3rd March 2012

Jiyeon's first language was English. Her unique background made her an easy target to provide language support for her co-nationals who studied abroad in the UK. It seemed that language support, rather than friendship, became one main reason her co-nationals approached her. As such, it was not difficult to justify Jiyeon's tendency to keep a distance from her co-nationals. It could be a way to protect her being.

In addition, Jiyeon brought up issues in relation to norms and codes from the culture and society of her home country. She felt that the Korean ways of doing things prevented her from being self. It seemed that she felt a sense of restriction in her behaviours when she engaged with local Korean people. As a result, she intended to stay away from the local Korean community.

> I suppose within that Korean community, you know it's still going to be the same Korean hierarchy that applies, meaning if they are older than you, you need to show them your respect. You know if they ask you to do something, you have to do it. That sort of thing. I think that's what, what kind of wants me to keep way.

Jiyeon appeared to consider that the Korean ways of doing things continued to influence people's behaviours even overseas. She felt it was natural and it was a 'habit' to do things certain ways and interact with each other based on certain manners.

> It's not eh I don't think it's the case of preservation. I just think that's what people are used to. That's what people do. I mean it's Korean way of life, so it's not like they are trying to preserve anything. I think it's just comes out as habit. And if I'm with them even I'm a bit more open minded and I don't agree necessarily with all those sort of Korean traditions, I naturally take my position within that community. If I'm a woman, so yes I will take on the role as female as well.

Jiyeon's third interview 3rd March 2012

Rather than seeking comfort and familiarity, Jiyeon had different views regarding co-nationals. She felt that hierarchical issues such as those in gender roles and power were widely performed within co-nationals abroad. Jiyeon's previous experiences implied that a transactional relationship was possible when language support, for instance, was the main reason that co-nationals were involved with each other. In so doing, Jiyeon was cautious.

Another case also had to do with the attempt to distance the self from co-nationals situating in a different context. Scarlett became very much irritated when she heard American people in social environment.

> And I refuse to go to American socials you know with International Students Society would send out saying oh we are doing Thanksgiving for the Americans. Whatever! I'd rather cook an intimate dinner with my real friends than to go pretend that I'm so you know with these people because we're not. And just within our own

country like because I'm from the south, we're automatically considered ignorant inbred rednecks that you know marry our cousins. We're not educated you know and so for me to meet someone from New York or to meet someone from California, the minute they go oh you are SUNNY STATE oh you're from sunny state. I get that look of disapproval like who let her out of the country? You know who gave her a passport?

Scarlett's third interview on 23rd April 2012.

Scarlett seemed to have much less tolerance and patience towards other Americans. Looked closer, Scarlett was against those who were full of self and misbehaved. It could be the result of prior experiences seeing how other Americans behaved and were frowned upon outside United States. Also, Scarlett's remarks led to a discussion focusing on how her own background was treated and looked at within her own country. That might explain why she sought to avoid co-nationals in the cross-cultural context. In this sense, it seemed that Scarlett utilised the overseas setting to establish a new being and did not intend to be disturbed by co-nationals who might extend their perceptions about her background in the different context.

In addition to socialising with co-nationals, there were boundary issues emerged to surprise my participants in terms of their social circles. There was joy in being able to cross boundaries to form friendship with different groups of people. It seemed that my participants were surprised by the new discovery because it would not have taken place in their home cultural context.

This is the first time in my life I have ever had as many girl friends as I have right now and be as close and honest with them as I am right now. … I have never had that before. Never. I have not really been trusting of other females. I really never let other females to get to know me that well. Em and I wonder if because of the fight I was having with my mom and my sisters I looked at that motherly relationship. I

looked for that you know sisterly relationship in the girl friends that I have here to replace what I didn't have from home.

Friendship with female individuals seemed to be a happy surprise for Scarlett even though her new individual and friend identities derived from difficult relationships with her parents and sisters. In so doing, Scarlett not only emancipated from the gender boundary, she also had new realisations about self. Her newly formed social identity, in this sense, incorporated gender, trust, and individuality.

Gender did not seem to be the only aspect that my participants managed to liberate from. There was also the age restriction embedded in culture.

There is one huge difference that I find since I've been here is I'm not restricted by age difference here. I've got great friends in their 40s. I've got fantastic colleagues who I consider to be my friends and they are in their early 50s and 60s. I've got great friends who are 21, 22. And that would not happen in Korea.

Jiyeon's second interview on 18th October 2011.

The fact that here age is not huge difference that they see me as an equal and I see them as my equal and I think yea if there's any difference huge difference the one that I do really treasure and value in being here that I don't have in Korea.

Jiyeon's second interview on 18th October 2011.

Jiyeon explained that roughly five years in age were the scope that was allowed in terms of friendship in the Korean cultural context. This meant that outside such an age scope relationships would not be considered as friendship. It appeared that

within the cultural norms and social codes that Jiyeon was familiar with age was a barrier preventing a relationship to become friendship. Spaces outside the home cultural context propelled Jiyeon to overcome the age barrier. In this sense, she emancipated from the age restriction and the entailed hierarchy. Being able to interact with different age groups in the different context characterised Jiyeon's social identities.

On the other hand, there were boundaries that emerged from social interactions, but in the end were not crossed. It was connected with the image of the individual identity.

> It's my trouble that while I was teaching, I can't really go out and just let myself go because there might be the chance to meet students. I shouldn't be completely drunk in front of my students. It's not good. I will leave all my credibility. … It's not only the professors. I mean I don't really need to see like adults completely losing it. With students, you just kind of expect it. That's what we did as students. That's part of student life, but after that, you get into real life. You start to behave I think. … I'm going to Germany next week meeting my friends and everything. I have no problem getting completely pissed because I would never meet someone that could be my students. I don't have to be a role model for anyone there.

> Karl's 4th interview on 8th June 2012

In the university where this current research was taking place Karl was also a tutor and lecturer. As such, he considered that being 'a role model' for his students was necessary. To do so, he needed to maintain his professional identity. In so doing, Karl managed his professional identity by seeking to behave properly accordingly in social activities. He attempted to ensure appropriate behaviours even outside the campus. The need to maintain a professional image became a barrier for his representation of the self. He was unable to act freely so to speak. In this sense, he could only break from the professional image when he was away from the academic environment and the context as a whole. That was probably why in his

mind this could only be achieved when he went home in Germany. This way, his very ambivalent social identities were concerned with identity presentation and management, which was bound by his need to remain professional.

Different circumstances provided my participants social situations to negotiate their social identities. There were conflicting thoughts and feelings about cultural norms and social codes in relation to social circles in my participants' cases. As a result, they experienced ambivalences. Some were able to liberate from the gender and age boundaries embedded in the home culture, whereas some decided to remain in the comfort zone due to self-protection and image management.

4.4. National and Cultural Identities Developed Overseas

It was evident that my participants were positioned, by overseas education, in an in-between state. They considered views and perceptions regarding study, personal responsibilities, supervisors, and social life in different ways. In my participants' cases, national and cultural backgrounds became salient issues in the query concerning their identity evolution. They carried with them various backgrounds and intrinsic and extrinsic cultural elements. The overseas education journey provided them with time and space to test, argue and adjust their beliefs regarding their countries and cultures. This section reports extent to which cultural and national identities underwent transformation.

Greek economy became international news headlines since 2009. During our interviews taking place between 2011 and 2012, the situation was not getting better. Mr. T remarked about Greece and being a Greek since Greek economic and financial crisis occupied the space of international news.

I remember there was this one day like two weeks ago, I was in the company … I went out for a cigarette. There was this guy … He always talks to us when he sees

us outside. I don't know why. So, there was this one day I was alone outside having a cigarette and he talked to me. He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "From Greece". And he said, "Ah, from Greece. It's a good thing you moved here. Did you move recently?" I said, "No, I moved like three years ago" and he said, "Ah, ok, ok". You know because he implied that this guy is from Greece and now the situation is a bit fucked up there, so he came up here in order to find a job.

<div align="right">Mr. T's third interview on 19th February 2012.</div>

Mr. T felt a slight level of negative implications. He considered that such implications came from news coverage. Compared to the very near past that Greece was talked about due to its place in tourism as a popular holiday destination, now it was related to negative subjects.

Well when it comes to British people, I mean they don't have problem with us. But I don't know if I live in Germany, whether the situation will be different. Because you know the media is based in Europe. You know they cultivate lies against Greece that they don't do anything that they don't have money that we'll give them money as a loan. Well when you give money as a loan, first of all, you don't get them for free, you are going to get it back. Secondly, you know that they think that we are useless that we don't work that we sit all day long.

<div align="right">Mr. T's third interview on 19th February 2012.</div>

Mr. T found it necessary to argue for his country and his people. He questioned the news stories and felt that the news coverage was biased. It seemed that he felt in the UK he had received relatively fair treatment, but wondered what the situation would be in Germany specifically. As the reality in Greece was not showing any positive changes, Mr. T felt that his country's prestige was damaged and his national identity was weakened. Moreover, there was even a hint of avoidance as the loss of national prestige also led to impairment of self-perception, eroding self-

confidence. Mr. T demonstrated a strong sense of helplessness and anger. He wanted to argue for his people, but it seemed useless in his opinion, especially the situation seemed to be dominated by financially stronger countries.

Another country that became international news headlines was Syria. The Syrian political unrest went from protests to now almost civil war level. It occupied the international news coverage since early 2011. Dora came from Syria and had encountered situations that she could not resist from speaking up. She also experienced conflicting thoughts and feelings about her country and the position of her country among the once friendly others.

Since the Arabic league joined the West to impose a sanction on Syria, Dora encountered conflicting thoughts about her cultural and national identities.

> So we have a very strong sense of nationalism, not Syrian, Arab nationalism. So in my identity card, my nationality is Syrian Arab, not a Syrian. And we are so upset now. We want the government to change this and just Syrian. We are different from Arab. So yea we have been stabbed in the back and I am quite upset.

> Dora's second interview on 29th November 2011.

> It's part of you because if you don't know what's happening in your country and maybe it's more related to the identity topic because this high sense of the Arab nationalism because whatever I've seen now, which is the opposite of what I've been brought up with, so it's a kind of irony. We were brought up to value Arab nationalism, but at the moment for the last few months, we've been feeling or living or experiencing the opposite that the Arabs are against us, so it's shocking to the be honest.

> Dora's second interview on 29th November 2011.

Dora had a strong Arabic identity based on culture, history, and education. She was educated to value Arab nationalism. However, sanctions imposed by countries of the Arabic league led her Arabic identity to experience ambivalent moments. It appeared that she was confused and angry at such practises. As her national and cultural identities were historically and culturally attached with the Arabic cultural and political ties, her feeling of betrayal triggered her to form different ways to view the connection with the Arabic world. As such, she asserted abandonment of the Arabic identity that she was brought up with. She wanted to sever all ties with the Arab league. She intended to emancipate from the original Arab Syrian identity. In this sense, a new Syrian national identity emerged from such experiences.

In addition, Dora highly regarded that it was her responsibility to articulate and clarify openly her firm belief and support for the Syrian government and the country.

> Sometimes I find a few days ago one of my friends she had a friend and then she introduced me to him and then he wanted to started asking me about Syria and my friends said, "Oh my god. Don't ask her. She's going to talk about the political situation forever". And I told her a different story from what you see in the media and I looked at her and said, "So, what do you mean?" But apparently, I get so excited whenever somebody ask me about my country and I start talking and non-stop because I feel it's my duty to show the real the actual image or picture of what's happened from my own experience. It's not true, but maybe I should not be doing this. But, something spontaneous, I can't resist it. I feel I have the duty towards my country to do that. I need. … My country is like my baby and I'm just defending. You're harming the baby. It's not true. This is not real. … Maybe I should after 7 or 8 months I should have learned that I have not to talk about the situation in Syria before I ask the listener.

> Dora's second interview on 29th November 2011.

It appeared that Dora was very much aware of the fact that it was inappropriate for her to convey stories from her perspective to the interlocutors in daily social occasions. She felt that it was her responsibilities to defend and protect her country. Roles of a 'representative', 'diplomat', and 'ambassador' emerged from such situations. Such roles were practiced in actions.

> Sometimes I join the people, the Syrian community. They gather sometimes to erm show their support of the government and the country to show the people here. Yes, in London. And I've joined them couple of times. Some people criticized me. They said to me, "How much did the government pay you to go there?" I felt so bad because nobody's ever told me forced me to do that. I went because I wanted to be there. They did not pay me. How much did they pay you for the travel to get there? Because they think from what they hear in the news.

Dora's second interview on 29th November 2011.

Dora felt that the news and media broadcast was misleading and sometimes wrong. As a result, she joined her people to tell the public the truth from her part. Also, she was not a stranger to have debates with those who held different opinions. Such actions demonstrated loudly and explicitly her thoughts and feelings about her country. However, she remarked that it was difficult for her to take care of both study and the need to argue for her country in public. The emphases of her identities encountered shifts between being a student and a patriot. She had this urge to argue for her country; nevertheless, she noticed that it had influenced her social life. Before Dora left the cross-cultural context for home, her assertion was not mitigated. Compared to the first half of her doctoral education where her life was focused on study and supervisory issues, her national and cultural identities were salient in the second half of her doctoral education.

Some other participants shared their stories regarding how they felt their senses and sentiments related to their home countries experienced shifts and changes. Unlike Greeks and Syrians who encountered major crisis in a national

and cultural level, some participants explored and reflected on how they viewed their own changes from an individual perspective.

Denise was frustrated that people would identify her country and her with countries that had historical issues with Armenia and the Armenians.

Armenia is a small country and it was part of the Soviet Union. When you say Soviet Union, most people think of Russian. So now Armenia is independent after Russia right. And it was independent before Soviet Union and it has a long history and identity at least 2,500 years going back to the time in the ancient world, so it's really an ancient country. But we happened to be part of Soviet Union in recent history 60, 70 years or whatever. Now when you say Armenia, most people don't know where it is, but as soon as you said eh … former Soviet Union most people said, Ah, you're Russian. So, immediately, as you said, I take no offence but I kind of resent it and I say, No, it's not Russia. I'm not Russian. … or because my country has a physical border with Turkey, which is a totally different culture, different nation, different religion. They are Muslim and we are Christian. I'm not too religious and I'm not a nationalist that kind of thing, but as you said when people mix things; when they wrongly identify you, Ah, so you must be Muslim. Or you must be oh Turkish or something like that. I said, NO. Especially we have historical things with Turkey. We had historical problems and differences. I immediately you know resent this. My identity comes to service kind of. No, I'm not. I am Armenian, which is a nation with blah, blah, blah you know. I made sure they know. I used to have often I mean questioned very often where you come from. This is the experience when I have to explain.

Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.

It seemed that being confused with other nationalities was not at all uncommon to Denise. However, a strong sense of adverse sentiments was likely to be provoked if she was confused with nationalities and peoples that had historical issues with Armenia and Armenians. Moreover, when the narration and comments had

negative implications, she found it necessary to articulate and explain the differences. In this case, historical properties in relation to culture and nation were much less negotiable. They actually played an important role in the need to argue for Denise's nation, history, and culture. She found it necessary and her responsibility to articulate and express in a salient and intense way about her background.

As time went by, Denise noticed the emergence of a more relaxed attitude towards topics related to her country and culture. Unless there were negative implications or specific situations where she found the need to remark on such themes, she tended to remain a neutral attitude to focus on the interlocutors who she identified with more.

> Recently I'm more relaxed. Sometimes if it is a person who doesn't matter too much like a friend's friend's friend in a pub whom I'm not going to see again, sometimes I'm just exhausted and tired explain too much. So recently I think I've learned just to cut it short to say, No, that's a different country. That's it. … Well, if they ask you implies some kind of inherent misunderstanding, which can also hurt the important part of your identity like mixing me confusing me with Turkish. It hurts me because in our identity in the narrative of our identity we have this historical differences with Turkey because Turkey historically Turkish people have occupied part of our lands because we have had this genocide experience from the Turkish in 1915. … Of course it would be a hurting thing to say to me to confuse me with Turkish or to confuse me with Muslim in case we are the oldest Christian nation we were of course. So when it hits the key things in your identity, that's when it hurts.
>
> Denise's second interview on 7th February 2012.

Denise remarked that the need to assert gradually became more settled as time went by. However, she emphasised that she would not tolerate confusions derived from historical and cultural backgrounds. It seemed that even after all these years

being in a cross-cultural context and having a relatively mature cosmopolitan identity, historical and cultural issues embedded in the home country and culture sometimes outweighed the intercultural agility and personhood, leading her to enact a representative role that empowered her to talk to people about her country and culture.

In Scarlett's case, it was related to her being an American. It seemed to attract people's attention easily due to the nation's power and position in the world.

When I moved here, Lisa and Sandy had to remind me several times you don't talk religion and you don't talk politics at a pub. And they said people are going to confront you because you're an American. People are gonna ask about Obama. People are gonna ask about George Bush and the war and blah blah blah. Because my husband was in Iraq and because he works for evil HB you know I was an easy target. I was a very easy target. And em there were couple of times when I first met them at the H, at G you know different pubs where people just got into this big I'm a confrontational person, so I wasn't gonna back down from a fight. Not at all. And I wasn't about to let somebody to make me feel ... guilty about being American. And so I got very nationalistic, very patriotic and you know waving my big flag, slapping in their faces with it you know even though in my heart I knew exactly what they're saying wasn't too far off. It wasn't bad, but I wasn't about to sit there and talked to like that. ... That was the I didn't know because I didn't lived here long enough to know you know I felt like a cat backed into the corner and I needed to you know. And now I realized that I can just curl into a ball and let them pet me. I don't have to you know I'm not out to fight. I'm out to have a good time. And I think it took running people off the table a couple of times for me to realize that it's not polite conversation. Em it's not good company and that I wasn't gonna make any friends that way. So I learned to cut it out. Like you said when people would start getting to trying to egg me on get it started, then I would just say you know something like, Let me buy you something would you like a Budwiser? No, you wouldn't. Just something to and then I would go buy them a drink and nobody's gonna turned down a drink. Nobody's gonna say, No, dirty American. I'm not gonna have your free beer. So I've learned that over the last couple of years.

Interestingly, Scarlett was warned by local friends and veteran overseas students to avoid certain subjects in social occasions due to her being an American. It seemed that this American identity could be problematic for her people being overseas. It was certain that Scarlett's friends had prior experiences in such a situation and indeed it was what she encountered. When negative implications were sensed from her perspective, she made sure it was argued. It appeared that she found it necessary to defend regardless right or wrong or whether or not it was appropriate. The national identity became highly salient and she became patriotic and nationalistic. It also took her some time to calm down. Similar to Denise, she gradually was able to see things from a more objective point of view.

The 'image' issue continued to be salient in Karl's case. It was concerned with the need to change what people think about German. Karl was heavily involved in social activities dominated by British students and local British people. As a result, Karl attempted to change stereotypes about Germany and German.

> It's easy to make jokes about British people with British people. I mean I can laugh about jokes about Germans and they at the same time laugh about jokes about the British. … But the British have great sense of humour. They always say the Germans don't have any sense of humour, but I try to teach them otherwise. Succeeded so far. They are curious. They want to meet new people.

Karl's first interview on 6th September 2011

Karl demonstrated this sense of 'representative' of his country. He was encumbered by the need, in his mind, to amend stereotypes.

Overseas doctoral education opened a space and a period of time that thoughts about self, others, and the environment were put to the foreground to clash and fuse. There were voluntary and coercive situations that led my participants' individual identities to become obscure while being the ambassadors emerged to defend, clarify and explain. It could be concluded that this part revealed that cultural and national identities were situational and indeed evolve over time and across space. Sometimes my participants could deal with issues in relation to their cultural backgrounds with relaxed attitudes. However, despite living overseas interacting with people from different backgrounds for a lengthy period of time, my participants still found that it could be difficult, at times, to reframe from the need to argue. In this setting, they were less independent individuals but more representatives of their cultural and national backgrounds and ambassadors or diplomats to those who they were engaged in the social occasions.

4.5. Socio-Cultural Adjustment

My participants shared with me their experiences in everyday life and being doctoral students developing overseas. They reflected on the impact of their intercultural interaction experiences on their thoughts and feelings from a personal growth and development perspective. Besides engagements with co-nationals while being overseas, my participants' experiences with others were on an intercultural basis.

4.5.1. Intercultural Interaction Experiences with British

Interaction experiences with British were supposed to be a basic daily practice for my participants. They pursued education in the UK and were surrounded by British people.

Karl remarked that he did not have more contact to foreign students than he had to the British students.

> These societies I'm in are ruled by the British, so they're not very international. In one of the choirs, it's just me and my housemate, two Germans. Apart from that, they're all British. In the running group, I'm not sure. I think there's a Chinese guy. No, really. I don't have more contact to foreign students than I have to the British students. Quite a contrary really.

Karl's second interview on 1st December, 2012

Karl's intercultural interaction experiences were mainly dominated by being with British students and individuals. He was surprised sometimes by the friendly attitudes British people had towards him, a foreign person.

> They often apologise to me that they don't speak my language, which really surprise me. Erm … I sometimes struggle with … speaking English. Especially you're in a pub and people talking very fast and it's loud and it's hard to understand. Sometimes it's difficult for me. Sometimes I use stupid phrases and they're just wrong. Most of them they say, 'Ok, I don't speak your language, so I can't make fun of you speaking my language badly because I don't speak your language at all'. Then they feel bad that they, most of them, don't speak any other language because they don't have to. And they really feel bad about it. It really surprise me.

Karl's first interview on 6th September 2011.

Language issue did not seem to influence Karl at social occasions with British people. Those people seemed to have an open mind towards language boundaries. He hence had a positive social experience from interacting with these people. Similar situation took place in Sophie's dating experience. Sophie shared with me her date with a British student. Unlike Karl, language became a barrier between the

man and her. Sophie was not able to understand fully phrases and idioms in relation to local English contexts and the man was unable to understand her English with a strong Greek accent. Before they learned more about each other, language became a barrier that would require them some effort. As a result, the date ended without further development.

Bob had a combination of positive and negative experiences interacting with British people. He enjoyed talking with elderly British people, as they were friendly and polite. He commented that it was probably because the older generation had experienced war and that made them more sophisticated. Bob had a strong opinion about young British people.

> They just doing parties out of everywhere. They just play football in their common area or you know they get out get drunk push people they insult people. They have insulted many times my girlfriend, so I was in a position you know to do what? Hit him? Do what? … I've never seen this situation in Greece.

> Bob's 4th interview on 29th August 2012.

Mr. T remarked from a relatively neutral and calm perspective compared to Bob. Mr. T focused more on the common interests than on how he felt about their behaviours. He found that he became friends with international individuals more than with British people due to having more common grounds.

In Jiyeon's case, she commented on situations that being a foreign individual was more salient than being an independent individual. She would like the situation to change if possible.

> I find here in that situation I find myself whenever I meet someone, I just wish they would want to get to know and I don't blame them because they're trying to be nice. That's what they're trying to do. They're trying to be welcoming. I think it's also part of that English mentality. Welcome foreigner! Welcome to our lovely country.

That is that sort of the thing you know what I mean and sometimes I just I know you're trying to be nice. That's what I've been thinking all these time. I know you're trying to be nice I know you're trying to be welcoming and I'm appreciated, but can you not just ask questions like what sort of movies I watch or what sort of music I like?

Jiyeon's first interview on 5th July 2011.

Jiyeon's experiences seemed to show a lack of depth in social occasions with some British people.

There seemed to be many different intercultural interaction situations with British. There were different levels of interaction. It appeared that my participants preferred to be known as independent individuals rather than culturally different ones.

4.5.2. Intercultural Interaction Experiences with the Other International Individuals

Most of my participants recounted that it was easier for them to form contact and relationships with international individuals.

Sophie remarked about a friend she made since she came to the UK. Her friend was Denise, who came from Armenia. To Sophie, Armenian and Greek did not have many cultural differences and she felt that they had a relatively common history. However, Sophie emphasised that it was commonality that they became friends. Her justification regarding being closer with international students in her case was focusing on similar situations.

I think the first thing is that you came in a country and you're all alone, so you desperately need someone. So, it's easier for people who just move in a different country to make friends because we all have the same needs.

Sophie's second interview on 27th October 2011.

A sense of fellowship seemed to emerge among overseas students based on Sophie's justification. While the fellowship seemed to justify for overseas students' tighter connection with each other, further exploration was required to find out whether or not it was a tendency among overseas students.

In Denise's case, she shared with me very colourful and lively intercultural interaction experiences ever since she began her overseas education. When she pursued a master's degree in London, it was her first time living abroad. She remarked that she had experienced culture shock not from the university and the study but from the diversity of streets.

I've never in my life seen so many different people from so many different races and colours to be honest because back home we are 99.9% Armenians, not even other types of Europeans but just my people. Very homogeneous country like when you walk the street you're sure that the other person is Armenian. You never ask, Where are you from? And that was a bit shock for me to come to London and everyone is asking everyone else, where are you from? And then you going to a bus or into a tube and everyone is different like you have the United Nations sitting in the tube. That was slightly a shock. And because obviously you are not settle here, you don't for a few months I didn't have properly the place to I had a place to stay, but it was just temporarily. So I wasn't quite settled yet. So I didn't feel at home very well. I was also tired and exhausted because I took for a job. On top of all that this diversity was a little bit too much for me because also you got all different em, for example, I remember different smells coming neighbour's house because the cooking is very, very different and I was not used to it. You know lots of spices and

eh sometimes it would make me sick even. Eh so in this way, it was a little bit shock. But I remember I got used to it very, very quickly.

<div align="right">Denise's first interview on 18th November 2011.</div>

It was at an individual dimension that Denise had such impressive and insightful experiences. Similar to the other participants, she compared such situations with those from home and realised they were very novel encounters. Denise took in these differences with a positive attitude and remarked having a different experience again during her doctoral education journey.

> That was really surprising when I first came to Exeter. There is too many white people hahahaha seriously. … And also those are Chinese and other Asian students. All kinds, but still there is still very few black people, very, very few. I was quite used to it in London, so I was surprised. … But if you if you put aside the students, the local people who live here, they are still 99% well the majority, just white English people, which you would not see in London. I'm not talking about students, just the people living there.

<div align="right">Denise's first interview on 18th November 2011.</div>

It appeared that Denise experienced culture shock for the second time. She realised that the current context was different from the one before even though her living and studying experiences took place in the same country. She then realised that diversity was the most valuable quality of this country.

Another unique example came from Scarlett, who was the only one native speaker of the English language among my participants. She found the need to argue strongly that being an American did not mean her doctoral education journey would be any easier for her than it would be for any other international students.

I think sometimes that people you know again other foreign students view me as, Oh she's so lucky. She doesn't have to work as hard. She doesn't have to translate. …I'm not trying to equate what I have to go through to anything to what you guys as foreign speakers have to go through, but the expectation for me are just as high and I'm expected to write in British English.

Scarlett's third interview on 23rd April 2012.

Scarlett remarked a misconception received from other international students. She felt that being a native speaker of English language led her to be considered encountering less challenging situations. She seemed to feel having less ground to express stress related to her study compared to other international students who seemed to need to work harder due to language barriers. Such a misconception put her in a less powerful situation among overseas doctoral students.

My participants' intercultural experiences demonstrated that such interactions could take place at an individual level. Their encounters of external differences challenged their thoughts and feelings, leading their minds to work internally. For them to form alternative worldviews they learned more about the others and, at the same time, their own cultures and countries. The intercultural interaction experiences became a strong impact on their understanding of self and the environment.

4.5.3. Impact of Intercultural Interaction Experiences on the Personal Growth and Development

Very often my participants reflected on how they valued the overseas education experiences especially on the part that they were able to interact with a great diversity of cultures and peoples in this cross-cultural context. They had a variety of

responses towards such experiences. This section reports the extent to which intercultural interaction experiences had an impact on their beings.

> The only thing that I think that this Ph.D. keep me apart from my professional life is the experiences that you get when you meet people from other cultures. This is something valuable. I think I will never have the chance to experience that again. Because even if I decide that I want to live my life in another place, not in my country but another country, I get this multiple culture environment is not possible to happen unless you're a student. I think it's the most important this Ph.D. life gives me apart from you know professional qualifications. I realise it now you know that when you first came you don't realise it. But, I know that I have only one year left here. I think that's something that I am going to miss.

> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

The UK context provided Sophie with a multicultural environment where she could engage with people from many backgrounds. She also realised that as a student she could experience diversity with depth, as she questioned that being a professional in the future she might not have such conditions that would allow her time to enjoy differences in depth.

Nevertheless, Sophie was not completely positive towards her intercultural interaction experiences. She felt there were still situations constraining the interaction.

> It's the difference that you have with people who are not Europeans. The way of understanding, their perspectives about different issues. That was quite shocking for me. Especially for people from the Arabic world. I think these other people I found that we have more differences than other people.

> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

Despite having positive reflections concerning intercultural interaction experiences, Sophie still found situations where more understanding was required when she was engaged with people coming from certain areas.

As an individual, Sophie also commented on her personal growth and development.

> I realised that living in a different doesn't make me less happy. That's what I was thinking like the first six months that I came here I was having fun. I was starting to make some friends, but I still I was missing my old friends, my childhood friends and my parents. Now I got used to it, so I don't mind. I know I can be happy wherever I am as long as I have people that I can have an actual conversation with and a job that makes me happy that fulfils me.
>
> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

It appeared that Sophie had a profound realisation of her growth. She noticed that she had developed personally. Now she was more independent compared to the self at the beginning of her overseas doctoral education journey.

> It's not that I was enjoying my life less. It's that I wasn't feeling safe here because I didn't have friends. I didn't know if my study was going ok. I wasn't feeling safe. It's different to have your family close to you and your friends close to you. And, it's different to be so many miles away from your parents. But, now I feel safe. I feel safe. I feel that I have good friends and I know that even if I have to change environment for a job, it's gonna take even 6 months or one year to start feeling safe, I know at some point eventually I'm gonna feel safe.
>
> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

It appeared that the sense of security was an important component in Sophie's life. She pointed out the importance of family and friends to a person. In her case, being a student pursuing education overseas made her feel less secure, as her major support system, her family and friends in her case, was positioned in a distant location. She felt it was one main reason that made her feel insecure while studying and living abroad.

> I think there are a lot of things that you are growing as a person as a researcher, as a person in a foreign environment and every single thing is quite new. Or you know you get more attached with your friends or you feel more confident to talk more straightforward with some people. Yes everything is getting more comfortable to be honest for me from the first year to now. Everything is now more easy.

> Sophie's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

To survive and thrive, Sophie managed to form friendship and adjust to this different lifestyle developed from the need to be more mature and independent. Now she felt more comfortable about self and formed confidence in her future endeavour.

Denise articulated in such vivid ways her encounters in the beginning of her overseas journey. After being in the UK for a lengthy period of time, she felt that she had adapted to all different smells, colours, and peoples. She would not be able to imagine UK without all those differences.

> I love the proper English English history and culture because that's what I study for my BA English language, English Literature, history, so when I came here, I came in a way when you have when you love something that you have studied it too much you are going to see it you know. So I still like everything English, but I think all these different colours and smells and cuisines and people and everything and cultures they just make it so much more interesting. Though I should confess the first month when I was here I saw these people in the tube, I couldn't hear like

because also you can't expect that you would improve your language though I had good background studying back home but you still want to hear the English people speak. And then all I was hearing was foreign sounds. Sometimes I would go like Oh my god! Where am I? I want to hear the English people the language. Not in a bad way intolerant. Not that you don't like these people, but you are like, Where is the English language? Where is the English culture? … I wouldn't ever imagine England without all that.

Denise's first interview on 18th November 2011.

Denises' previous intercultural interaction experiences led her to encounter multicultural environment for the first time. She felt that she became much more tolerant as a result of different cultures and peoples. It appeared that a sense of intercultural personhood emerged in Denise's individual identity. Such an intercultural personhood became prominent in her trip home. She came back to the UK with an explicit changed view about her culture. She seemed to form a critical view concerning her background. She even described it as a culture shock going back home.

Not shock maybe because shock means something you don't expect. But most of the things I already know it's gonna be there, I expect. But this time the expect I don't adjust. I don't wannna accept it. I don't wanna be part of it some of it I don't wanna participate you know in some cultural things. … The differences yea and it was harder this time than the other time.

Denise's fourth interview on 8th August 2012.

Denise felt that she would not want to identify with certain mentality that had been existing in Armenia for a lengthy period of time. She found that she took it closer to heart than before. Issues such as gender differences were no longer thought about and accepted compared to before in her case.

What I'm saying is that this time I was very sensitive to those things even if it didn't relate to me at all you know. Like someone outside, neighbours, someone on TV. Not related at all and I know I'm gonna leave in a few weeks and it shouldn't bother me right! But, I was kind of sensitive to those things. I was more taking them closer to heart. I don't know. I was feeling like, No, this is not part of me. I can't be part of it. And it's very hard and I also feel like this you don't have enough power to change people's thoughts and mentalities. One person cannot do that, but you also don't want it to be there, but you can't do much you know.

Denise's fourth interview on 8th August 2012.

Denise felt that she always had different thoughts about her culture, but she realised that it was the time being abroad that helped her to develop and become more mature so that she was able to describe different thoughts and feelings when reflecting on her background. Now she was able to articulate in what ways she disagreed with the norms and codes embedded in her cultural background.

Sophie and Denise's experiences exemplified that the overseas education provided them with intercultural interaction opportunities in physical and psychological levels where they experienced individual transformation. Such transformations, in their opinions, helped them to grow and formed a critical perspective to view their backgrounds. Indeed among my participants Sophie, Denise, Scarlett, and Dora remarked on the difference between self in the beginning of the doctoral education journey and the self now. They pointed out that they had grown to become more independent and cosmopolitan. Sophie, Denise and Scarlett felt that they were able to imagine working in another country after their overseas education was completed. This was not what they could have imagined doing in the beginning when they embarked on the overseas journey.

Some participants, despite being mature and independent, decided that they would go home or to contexts similar to home, to begin their careers and lives after

they were awarded the doctorate. Dora felt that she had developed a more independent and intercultural personhood. Nevertheless, she did not intend to work abroad. Rather, she looked forward to going home to start her new life in the home context and contribute what she had learned to her people. In Karl's case, he demonstrated a very independent characteristic from the beginning of his overseas doctoral journey. He showed very strong senses in intercultural understandings. After his doctorate, I assumed that he would want to seek professional opportunities overseas. However, Karl felt that he preferred to work in familiar contexts where language issues would not be barriers in work and in life. He remarked that living and working in a country that required him to encounter new lifestyles and languages would not be a challenge if he were younger. This way, age emerged to influence future decisions in Karl's case even though he demonstrated mature intercultural understandings and an independent personality.

Intercultural interaction experiences seemed to help some of my participants to become more mature and independent. As a result, they gained confidence to support planning for their imagined future. They felt that they were capable of developing lives overseas. The emerging theme among my participants was that they did not necessarily aim to develop life overseas. While they demonstrated a strong sense of intercultural personhood and understanding, working overseas was not the only way to show that they had grown and developed such maturity and understandings. In short, intercultural interaction experiences helped my participants to form different personal outlook on life.

4.6. Change Over Time and Across Space

Over the course of our interviews that traced my participants for a year, change was one salient theme. My participants encountered changes as time went by and as spaces were crossed. Their experiences in learning and living were captured by this research, which utilised a longitudinal design to allow their trajectories to be better illustrated when time and space were taken into consideration.

4.6.1. Emancipation from Cultural Norms and Social Codes

Studying abroad led my participants to encounter situations where they needed to make decisions that might be very different from those they might have made in their home contexts. This research found that my participants managed to liberate self from their cultural norms and social codes in socialisation and academic context.

Karl, Sophie, and Bob pointed out that they felt more relaxed and closer to their supervisors based on the different way to address and communicate with supervisors. In Karl's case, it was the attached significances to 'Sie' and 'Du'. Change in language and contexts liberated Karl from restricting student-supervisor relationships. Sophie and Bob highlighted how they appreciated a closer, less strict, and relaxed working relationship with their supervisors in the UK context.

Outside academic aspect my participants emphasised that they emancipated from boundaries in relation to social and cultural requirements. Scarlett was surprised that she was able to befriend with many female individuals in the UK. Jiyeon was surprised that she was able to befriend with individuals from different age groups. Studying and living overseas had provided Jiyeon and Scarlett time and space to develop and establish friendship that freed them from the age or gender boundary.

To liberate self from certain norms and codes embedded in the home culture and society was not an easy task to accomplish. Cultural norms and social codes would not become emergent issues until they were missing or challenged. In my participants' situations, they realised the differences during their overseas education. They were surprised as they were able to free self from such boundaries. In this sense, these experiences had a positive significance to their personal identities.

4.6.2. Supervisory Change

Half of my participants had experiences in supervisory change. There were different reasons leading to such a move from different perspectives of the supervisor as well as the supervisee.

Jiyeon, Sophie, Scarlett, and Dora experienced changes of supervisors. Among them, Jiyeon encountered such a situation twice, in which both times were concerned with her primary supervisors' decision of relocation. The first time occurred in an early stage of Jiyeon's doctoral journey and the second time took place after Jiyeon came back from her very needed trip home. Nevertheless, Jiyeon did not remark negative feelings. On the contrary, she appeared to be independent and demonstrated a very high level academic autonomy. She seemed to be able to compartmentalise her academic progress from interpersonal connections with the supervisor. She demonstrated a professional attitude towards her responsibility as a supervisee, which could be reflected on her views towards conducting the Ph.D. and the student-supervisor relationship. Jiyeon strongly felt that the Ph.D. was her own obligation to complete while the supervisor provided advice and support when needed. As such, Jiyeon did not appear to be influenced by changes of supervisors in her study and her being.

On the other hand, Scarlett claimed that she was not aware of her supervisor change until much later. She felt a sense of pride when she learned that the new supervisor, who was very famous in the field of her study, chose to have her as the supervisee. However, she reported very negative working experiences with the new supervisor. While considering whether or not to apply for a change of supervisor, power issue seemed to play a role in her decision making process. Scarlett felt the seniority and reputation of her supervisor in the field and at the university would prevent lecturers at the department from wanting to work with her. Nevertheless, in our last interview Scarlett started to explore her responsibilities as

a Ph.D. student. She attempted to resume her power and duty that could lead her to move forward and her study to progression.

Unlike Scarlett who hesitated about applying for a change of supervisor, Dora was very decisive. As she was not satisfied with the working and interpersonal relationship with the supervisor, she was determined to change the situation. She applied for a supervisor change on her end. Although there were cultural expectations in her views about the supervisor, she demonstrated high autonomy in study and felt it necessary for her to receive timely guidance. She then was proactive and changed the situation for a direction that better suited her needs.

My participants' experiences illustrated that the need to change and the practice of changing the supervisor could influence their beings to different degrees. While some remained calm, the others could feel anxious and uncertain. My participants' agentic power emerged to become an issue in their decision-making process. Whether they felt discouraged or motivated to apply for a change of supervisor, they examined and reflected on their student-supervisor relationships before the action. In so doing, my participants' reflection helped them to confront their responsibilities as students. It appeared that such supervisory change brought shifts that could destabilise my participants' identities.

4.6.3. From A Student-Supervisor to Student-Teacher Relationship

During our interviews my participants remarked on their student-supervisor relationships being professional and friendly, in need of timely feedback, and falling short of constructive advice and guidance. The relationships remained constant relatively. Among them, Karl felt interesting that he had noticed a different relationship emerged between the supervisor and he, and described how such a change was shown in the supervision.

Karl had been independent and reported having a mature and professional relationship with his supervisor, whose office was very close by and they communicated with each other on a daily basis. As Karl reached the later phase of his doctoral journey, he felt that a need for more checkpoints emerged. To ensure that he advanced according to his goals, the supervisor increased the frequency to visit Karl's office to enquire about his progress. Compared to before, Karl now felt that his being monitored actually motivated him and encouraged him to persevere and stay focused at this later phase. In such a setting, the supervisor became a teacher monitoring Karl's progress closely and Karl shifted from being a very independent supervisee to a student who required the teacher to oversee his work.

While Karl managed to figure out his changed need, his supervisor also appeared to understand and hence responded to his needs. His doctoral education journey in this way continued to be informed with positive experiences despite his different needs.

4.6.4. Life Changing Events

My participants, just like any other ordinary individuals, encountered life changing events in their lives that influenced their identities to different degrees. These events could bring positive effects to them. At the same time, they could be so negative that my participants needed to come up with drastic measures in order to resume their lives.

Mr. T noticed that he had not had friends from home, Greece, to visit him in the UK ever since the economic crisis became a serious issue. Bob and Sophie became conservative when they visited home and were with their friends. Their lives were relatively more comfortable in the UK compared to their friends back home. While they developed different outlooks in life, their conservative attitudes and behaviours did not help them to remain closer to their old friends. On the

contrary, new friendship established during their overseas education became stronger. Their future outlooks became more different from those at home.

Dora only needed to focus on her study in the early phase of her doctoral education journey. She experienced interruptions in relation to a mismatch with the supervisor. She also encountered a need to find a balance between relationship and work. These situations could be described as common for ordinary doctoral students. Dora, however, experienced crisis in a national level in the middle of her study. The Syrian political unrest led her to dramatic personal situations in which she was unable to contain her urge to make a loud appeal to those who lived in the UK for clarification. As such, her study was seriously affected. She then decided to refocus in order for her to complete her education and to go home.

Over the course of our interviews Jiyeon's experiences informed this study with most drama from her personal situations. She was a married woman. Her husband came with her to be by her side while she pursued her postgraduate education in the UK. She was a wife in our first interview; she asked her then husband to leave for Korea and decided to file for a divorce in our second interview; she started the legal procedure of having a divorce done and was depressed in our third interview; and, our fourth interview recorded that she gradually was recovering from the divorce and was able to start her study again.

These participants' personal situations were derived from life changing events. As such, it seemed to be common to encounter fluctuations. While my participants were so focused on the doctoral study, they were also ordinary individuals who would need to form ways to continue everyday life in the face of life changing events.

4.6.5. Different Outlook on Life

My participants grew and developed overseas. Such experiences led them to form different outlook in life from before. It seemed that the overseas education contributed to the formation of changed perspectives in self, the environment, and future plans.

Sophie reflected on her doctoral journey and described that she had transformed from being dependent to independent. Based on the confidence gained in her learning and living experiences overseas, she felt that she had grown from a student to a researcher and a mature individual. Such confidence was also demonstrated in her different outlook on life. She felt that she was emancipated from limiting work locations in Europe to being able to start a career wherever the career led her to be. Similar to Sophie, Denise and Scarlett had shared with me such a changed views on self and their future plans. They were not certain to work outside familiar places in the beginning of their doctoral journey. After being overseas for a lengthy period of time, they learned and felt prepared to start life wherever it could be. Location did not play a role in their decision making process any more. The focus was not on the part where they were no longer constrained by locations of the job but on the confidence developed in self. As such, they formed different outlook on life.

The changed outlook on life derived from everyday life experiences and demonstrated my participants' personal growth and development. Being involved in learning and living overseas for a lengthy period of time, they not only survived but also thrived in a context that was different from home. Such a journey led them to reflect on their past and plan for the imagined future.

4.7. Impact of Being involved in This Study on My Participants

I invited overseas doctoral students from a variety of backgrounds to participate in my research to learn about their living and learning experiences in order to explore their identity evolution. Being a participant of my research required them to remain

involved for a year out of their doctoral education journey. They reflected on their participation in the fourth interview respectively.

Scarlett shared with me her personal situations from all parts of her life. I considered that it was her trust in me that allowed her to explore herself with me in our interviews.

> I feel bad for you because I feel at some point it was less of an interview and more of a therapy session. Feel like you've turned into more a psychologist and the therapist listening to you know my issues and then offering advice on it or what you can do to help or things like that. So I feel like you should get a check for about 150 pounds an hour for you know these therapy sessions.

Scarlett's fourth interview on 10th September 2012.

There were several times, indeed, I seemed to be a therapist or a psychologist attentively listening to Scarlett's issues. The difference though lied in the way I listened to her. I was being a sincere and active listener who paid attention to her and her stories. I listened with no prejudice. I did not judge her situations. I provided advice and became personally and emotionally involved in her individual being. This might explain the high degree of trust that was salient in our relationship.

Karl reflected that he was not familiar with the way I conducted research and collected data. He was interested in the idea of exploring identity and identification.

> Cus you are looking at identity, but I've never really thought about how I identify myself in this whole Ph.D. thing. It's more like from the interview you get kind of an idea of how you identify yourself, but I would never thought about it before. Brilliant in that terms really. It's very interesting.

Karl's fourth interview on 8th June 2012.

It appeared that Karl learned from this interview how one identified self in different contexts in relation to various communities. It was a novel experience for him to explore relations with groups and how he would like to be identified by self and others. Similar to Karl's experiences being a participant of this research, Bob and Mr. T also delved into their beings and identities. Bob and Mr. T remarked feeling curious about how such qualitative data could be analysed and utilised to describe their transformation. They were more interested in the analysis process and the presentation of this research than exploring self and relations to the bigger worlds.

In Denise's case, there was a sense of uncertainty in the beginning. She was not sure that there were enough experiences to share in my longitudinal design. During the course of our interviews, she gradually could see how different this research was compared to what she thought in the first place. My personal involvement confused her in the first interview; however, such confusion was clarified in the next interviews.

> I found it increasingly more useful that you're telling part of yourself. Because first, it created trust; second, we're kind of comparing and discussing and third, you are not treating me as the same as you know like participant.
>
> Denise's fourth interview on 8th August 2012.

Denise emphasised the importance of trust and how my personal involvement led her to feel valued as an equal. It appeared that she explored self with depth and realised how such experiences helped in her self-discovery journey.

Sophie felt that she realised how much she had changed during the course of our interviews due to the needs for self-exploration. She constantly needed to reflect on her being and experiences that led her to such thoughts and feelings. It was also a rare opportunity where she could focus on self by talking about self.

In general, it was a comfortable procedure. It's a relaxed procedure. Because you never talk about yourself for an hour constantly and it was something new for me. And sometimes, it was a bit weird. Not uncomfortable, but weird. But then when you finish, you realised that ok we talk about myself for one hour and it made you realise about some stuff that you have never thought of before.

Sophie's 4th interview on 8th June 2012.

Similar to Scarlett who focused on the opportunity to focus a talk on self, Sophie appeared to feel uncommon about the experience. Also, similar to Karl and Denise, Sophie seemed to be more impressed by the interviews that led her to discover and learn more about self. In this sense, she had a self-discovery journey.

My participants highlighted the importance of trust in this research design. Without trust, there would be much less in-depth data to inform my exploration. Also, my participants felt that it was a journey in which they also learned more about self. They described events taking place in life and how they felt about such events. In this setting, they explored and reflected on self with retrospective and introspective point of views. They managed to identify self in relation to communities that they were part of and discovered their beings by delving into their feelings and thoughts. As such, they not only informed this research with their learning and living experiences but they also grew with this research.

Concluding Remarks of the Findings

This research queried the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. My participants remarked on their learning and living experiences in relation to study, social, and personal lives in order for this research to explore their changes. Their narratives covered a variety of themes from being in

different phases in the Ph.D. journey, issues derived from working with the supervisor, the importance of social life and relationships to individual being, cultural and national identities, intercultural interaction experiences, to changes in life and in study, and to the impact of being involved in this study.

My participants remarked milestones to achieve in different phases of the doctoral study. The Ph.D. journey became a dynamic rather than a linear trajectory in which authority in writing, sense of independence, and academic autonomy evolved to influence the participants' beings and identities. In addition, supervisor contributed to the learning experiences and identity evolution. Support and understanding led to more positive doctoral journey whereas availability of supervision and constructive feedback played a role in influencing my participants' feeling, being, and confidence levels. Moreover, social identities in relation to home, family and friends, as well as relationships demonstrated strong connections to my participants' identity evolution. Marital discord, social circles, and friendship were contributing conditions. Finally, my participants talked about cultural and national identities. The intercultural interaction experiences took place on a daily basis in which they became ordinary practices. In most occasions my participants were able to transcend from intercultural to interpersonal relationships. A critical review of self and original contexts emerged among my participants. The participation of my research provided them with opportunities to reflect on their doctoral education journey. They learned that they indeed were changed.

Explored from study, personal, social, as well as cultural aspects of my participants' lives showed that there were cultural elements embedded in their ways of being, seeing, and doing things. These aspects were not separated but tightly interconnected and informed their identity evolution. They underwent change while pursuing doctoral education overseas. Our interviews illuminated that being overseas heightened these participants' sensitivity level regardless of their age, gender, lived experiences, and backgrounds in relation to culture, profession, and disciplines.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I seek to explore significances from the findings in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The purpose is to answer my principal research question exploring the extent to which overseas education has an impact on doctoral students' identity evolution. My participants' learning and living experiences are grounded upon the overall lives and encounters of doctoral students and international students and individuals. They interact with fellow colleagues, supervisors, faculty members, and individuals inside and outside the campus context to research, write theses, and live everyday lives. They are like every other doctoral student who needs to be original, creative, and making a contribution to the knowledge of the field of study. Their particularities derive from interacting with others and the environment, which influence their ways of being and thinking. Their identities, explored via academic, personal, social, and cultural aspects, undergo conflicts and liberation, an ongoing and cyclical process that they go through on a daily basis. They become distinctive as a result of hybrid ways of thinking and feeling that inform their hybrid identities. In this chapter I first brief my research purpose and methodology. I then present the ordinary components in overseas doctoral students' Ph.D. journey to show their commonalities with general doctoral students. However, despite having similar experiences as general doctoral students, my participants' learning and living experiences lead their identities to evolve and illustrate distinct features that make them unique. This is presented as extraordinary components in my participants' overseas doctoral journey.

5.1. Summary of the Research Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to focus on the journeys of overseas doctoral students' identity evolution in order to find out the implications of being in a cross-cultural context that is different from the home context for my participants from 2011 to

2012. To do so, I formed the principal research question as '*What are the implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution?*'

I consider overseas doctoral students in particular because they are positioned on the borderland where prior knowledge is tested on a daily basis. The daily attacks on prior knowledge provide an impetus to change, to a certain extent, the ways to view self, others, and the environment. Everyday life is a stage for them to reflect on what they have and to evaluate possible features or ways to continue their lives. From the outset the areas of focus for this study were overseas doctoral students' learning and living experiences in relation to academic, personal, social, and cultural aspects. To have access to these aspects of life, my study required me to form close relationships with target students, eight participants coming from seven nationalities and three discipline for a period of time in order for me to track their experiences that can inform change, explain the processes of such change, and influence the decision to make the change. A longitudinal research design utilising the in-depth interview was employed. Active listening, an interactive style, as well as my personal and emotional involvement characterise the in-depth interviews of my research.

Each participant went through four individual interview sessions. Every participant's four interviews were bound to form a transcript booklet, which became the major data analysis material for this study. To understand the implications of overseas experiences for my participants, I applied thematic analysis seeking to "identify themes within the data" and issues beyond my anticipation (Ezzy, 2002, p. 88). There were two rounds of data analysis. My focus in first round was on individual participants hoping to contextualise each participant by exploring the life established around Ph.D. study. The need to create a section to introduce each participant emerged. Examiners of this research advised that a cameo for each participant helps present each participant as a whole person. In so doing, readers learn about the participant contextually. In the second round, the analysis of the participants transitioned from an individual examination to a comparative one. I aimed to identify key issues that could illuminate similarities and important elements (Cohen, 2007). It is a filtering process where my own background, the

interview guide, and my personal and emotional involvement help to inform my predictions and sensitivity. This way, I am able to "perceive, document, and thus code" (Saldana, 2008, p.7). Through pre-coding and open coding, meaningful units significant to my participants and emergent codes were identified. Through a repeated process of coding and re-coding, interconnections between codes were recognised. Specifying "the relationships between codes" and "the conditions associated with a code" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 93), codes were organised into categories. Comparing and contrasting the categories of all the participants allowed me to synthesise categories across the participants. I then identified themes manifesting the meaning attached to the data (Lichtman, 2006). I aimed to explore categories and the subsets of the categories to identify common themes. This way, I could identify issues of different levels of "scope" in my participants' doctoral journey and note their influence on identity evolution (Cohen, 2007, p. 466).

Being ordinary doctoral students, my participants were required to achieve tasks in different phases of the doctoral education journey, deal with work and interpersonal relationships with their supervisors, produce quality writing to fulfil needs, worry about finances on a daily basis if financial aid was not available, maintain relationships with home, family and friends, and interact with individuals coming from various backgrounds. They worried about their thesis progress, feedback and guidance provided by the supervisor. They formed different thoughts and feelings while they re-socialise with people in the new environment. They seek independence in addition to support from family and friends. The doctoral students' learning and living experience provided a framework to help me to explore my participants' overseas doctoral education journeys. Nevertheless, crossing cultural, language, and national boundaries influenced the construction of hybrid identities in my participants. Such hybrid processes were demonstrated in their writing, perceptions of supervisor's roles, socialisation and friendship, outlook on life, social, cultural, and national identities, and support systems. This research finds that my participants, overseas doctoral students, are distinct. Studying abroad influenced their identity evolution.

To further discuss manifestations of my findings, I expound firstly ordinary components within my participants' doctoral journey. I then illuminate components that make my participants extraordinary to show that overseas education influences their identity evolution.

5.2. Ordinary Components in Overseas Doctoral Students' Ph.D. Processes

My participants' learning and living experiences and identity evolution show that they are to some extent ordinary doctoral students. In this section I present the ordinary components of their doctoral journey to provide this study with a foundation for further discussion.

5.2.1. Dynamic Processes in Different Ph.D. Phases

My participants were in different phases of their doctoral education journey during the period of time they were involved in my research. They each had different tasks to do in order for them to accomplish milestones of the phases. They were, at the same time, very aware of goals and activities required in the doctoral process.

Milestones that mark the early phase of the Ph.D. process include being aware of and familiar with the demands of the programme and making an effort to meet the demands (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Bob was in the beginning of his Ph.D. journey. Nevertheless, his situations did not reflect such a transitional feature completely. Bob was involved in learning new skills and knowledge relating to his learning approaches. He demonstrated having an established network and understanding the need to write and communicate more assertively (Walsh, 2010). He did not have the need to modify and learn different communication styles (Evans & Stevenson, 2011; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine, 2012b; McAlpine et al.,

2009; Walsh, 2010). Bob began his Ph.D. right after his master's degree was awarded in the same institution. This might explain why he was much more familiarised with the requirements and had a more established network. Given his circumstances, the transitional phase did not exist in Bob's case.

Following the transitional phase, Ampaw and Jaeger (2012) argue that doctoral students need to elaborate and justify their research purpose, theoretical framework, and methodology, and develop their networks. Such a developmental requirement is found in my participants' Ph.D. processes. Being in a stage prior to data collection, Scarlett and Jiyeon worked on developing their theories while Sophie and Mr. T were in the middle of data collection. Each of them faced difficulties. Scarlett struggled with being recognised by her supervisor and enacting her agent role; Jiyeon's marital problems distracted her and greatly influenced her being and her intention to study; Sophie's challenge was the need to write more assertively; and, Mr. T's research was dependent upon the success of a cooperative project. In line with Lyons and Scroggins (1990), Paglis et al. (2006), and Pearson and Brew (2002), networks, autonomy, and self-efficacy influenced Mr. T, Sophie, Scarlett, and Jiyon's doctoral studies. However, there are additional issues contributing to their Ph.D. processes more profoundly. Personal situations, cultural differences in writing, and different research project styles illuminate that research study is not the only one element in doctoral students' lives.

During the final phase of a Ph.D. programme doctoral students write up their thesis to elaborate on the meanings of their research findings, gain supervisor's approval, make their contribution to the field clearly, and pass viva successfully (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012; Halls & Burns, 2009; Lyons & Scroggins, 1990; Paglis et al., 2006). Both Karl and Dora's experiences resonate with Polonsky and Waller's (2015) argument that the research phase is the harvest time where communication with supervisors helps to move the students' research toward desired and positive outcomes. At this phase where the completion of the doctorate is eminent, Karl and Dora manage to remain focused. In Dora's case, she was able to ignore situations that could distract her progress. Personal situations, such as those related to

national unrest and personal being, were salient factors that influenced Dora's completion process.

Networks, self-efficacy, and relationships with the supervisor are not sufficient to explain academic success. My participants are different from and incongruent with some studies suggesting that students become more "assertive and proactive" in study as time goes by (for instance, Hung & Hyun, 2010, p. 347). Personal situations, cultural differences in writing, and research project types all contribute to different Ph.D. phases, making the achievement of milestones a more complicated matter. My participants' dynamic doctoral journeys point out that doctoral students are not developing in a vacuum where their research studies can develop without being influenced by their lives outside of their academic study. There are also personal and cultural elements that can affect their identities greatly.

5.2.2. Identity Shifts

There were shifts in and evolution of the participants' identities. This is coherent with arguments in studies that view identity from a fluid perspective (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston & McDermott, 2009).

My participants had strong opinions regarding what they did and who they were in terms of their doctoral studies. Some focused on learning and some emphasised independence. Those who highlighted independence, notably, Karl, Scarlett, and Denise, did not enjoy being viewed as 'students', as they considered students as being dependent and immature. They wished to present themselves as independent, mature, and competent. In this sense, they desired that the way they viewed themselves matched how others viewed them. However, participants from this group did experience identity shifts. Such shifts took place when Karl and Scarlett needed to remain advantageous. While Karl simply needed to be a student for concession reasons, Scarlett's centred upon receiving confirmation of what kind of person she perceives herself is. Her need highlighted the concept of identity

presentation. She wanted to present herself and be viewed as professional, competent, and compassionate, resulting in constant shifts in her doctoral journey.

Compared to Scarlett, the other participants who show autonomy and self-efficacy and accept being students focusing on learning tended to have a smoother doctoral journey. Scarlett did not recognise herself as a student; did not assume her agent role to change her situations; needed recognition from others rather than forming a consolidated identification of herself; and, she did not intend to take on the responsibilities of a student. Her identity shifts illuminate conflicts in her identity presentation and self-cognition. In her case, her identity shifts lead her to conflicts and challenges in both study and everyday life. All these issues contribute to a less positive learning experience for Scarlett compared to the other participants.

5.2.3. Supervisory Issues

Supervisors are an important role in doctoral students' educational journey (Polonsky & Waller, 2015; Bell, 2010). The role of the supervisor and the interpersonal relationship between a doctoral student and supervisor are critical to doctoral students' success and a positive doctoral journey (Hall & Burns, 2009; Lyons & Scroggins, 1990; Paglis et al., 2006; Polonsky & Waller, 2015).

Some participants, such as Dora and Sophie, became gradually more autonomous when help from their supervisors was available. Some participants, for instance, Denise and Scarlett, became frustrated when the supervisor failed to consider their family difficulties, financial condition, and their international student status. Participants Jiyeon, Scarlett, and Dora, went through the typical conflict between personal relationships and their careers. To make allowances for such situations is difficult for some supervisors. To do so, these expands the supervisor's roles beyond those of "educator", "motivator", "evaluator", "information source", and "sounding board", argued by Polonsky and Waller (2015, p. 35-39). Consistent with the results of many studies (for instance, Bennet, 2008; Dwyer,

2004; Gonyea, 2003), these participants showed great appreciation when academics, staff, and supervisor were more understanding regarding their personal lives providing them with reassurance concerning their academic progress. In this sense, my participants' experiences demonstrate that successful supervision requires combining the responsibilities of an adviser and a mentor by becoming one who advises doctoral students' progress and takes students' personal situations into consideration (Hall & Burns, 2009).

The student-supervisor relationship is grounded upon "mutual respect and sensitivity" (Li & Seale, 2007, p. 520). Most of my participants—Bob, Jiyeon, Sophie, Denise, Mr. T, and Karl—demonstrated trust in their supervisors. Dora is cautious in her relationship with her supervisor; however, she recognised the importance of having guidance and support. Scarlett recognised the value of her supervisor's "knowledge of the research field", the fact that her supervisor was available regularly, and that her supervisor was experienced. Nevertheless, she reported a negative learning experience and working relationship with the supervisor. Coherent with the Li and Seale's (2007, p. 513) "supervisory styles" and Wisker et al.'s (2003) supervision relationship, my participants' learning experiences contained elements of clarification, direction, probing, elicitation, "criticism and disagreement", "praise and thanks, apologies, misunderstandings, advice-giving or advice delivery" (Li & Seale, 2007, p. 513-514). However, Scarlett's encounters show constant dissonance and confrontation. She is unable to release tension. Dora's initial supervisory experiences weakened her trust in her supervisor. It is possible that Dora feels supervisor in the UK exhibits transactional and clinical attitudes, meaning it is a business deal where student-supervisor relationship can end when the doctorate is awarded. In this way, Dora might consider that the UK higher education context fails to deliver an in-depth relationship for her. Moreover, the participants' relationships with their supervisors highlight that being friendly with one's supervisor is a basic requirement. However, being friends can raise problems. In line with Ives and Rowley's (2005) suggestion that friendship may destabilise the 'power dynamic' between the student and supervisor, many of my participants remain professionally friendly, rather than being friends, with their supervisors. Many experiences resonate Li and Seale's

(2007, p. 522) argument of a "professional-client relationship" in that they have mutually accepted and understood obligations, goals, and advantages. The only exception was Mr. T's friendship with his supervisor. I speculate that Mr. T's past professional experience and his being able to compartmentalise various elements of his life gave rise to the friendship and work relationship he developed with his supervisor.

Based on my participants' experiences, they encounter issues in their relationship with supervisor and experience supervisor change. Cultural differences are not found to be a critical element contributing to enhance or hinder student-supervisor relationship and their Ph.D. processes. They are not more vulnerable in this regard. However, there are cultural expectations that influence appropriate roles of supervisors, doctoral students, and of the student-supervisor relationship.

5.2.4. Disciplinary Differences

Disciplinary cultures reveal the existence of a "disciplinary habitus" (Huber, 1990, p. 241) and a "microclimate" (Walsh, 2010, p. 548) within different disciplines. My participants' learning experiences resonate such concepts.

My participants come from three different disciplines: Business, Social Sciences and International Studies, and Engineering, Mathematics, and Physical Sciences. Jiyeon, Sophie, Dora, Denise, and Scarlett have different majors in terms of their research studies, but they are all from Social Sciences and International Studies. Similar to doctoral students from Education department in Chiang's (2003, p. 18) research, these five participants feel isolated and have an "individualist" working style. Their discipline hence is more likely to be considered under "granular" and "fragmented" microclimates where very little or rare connections and interactions take place within group and group members (Walsh, 2010, p. 548). On the other hand, Karl and Mr. T come from the Engineering, Mathematics, and Physical Sciences disciplines and have similar experiences to

the Chemistry students' experiences in Chiang's (2003) study in that they have closer relationships with supervisors and receive more support from supervisors. They also demonstrate a sense of belonging (Walsh, 2010). Despite the fact that this group of participants does not emphasise a "teamwork" working relationship (Chiang, 2003, p. 18), they took on the role of an 'apprentice' given that their learning and interactions were conducted on a daily basis (Li & Seale, 2007). In line with Chiang (2003) and Li and Seale's (2007) findings, students of this kind tend to form a capacity to evolve from being more dependent to more independent.

My participants needed to accomplish requirements set in different phases in their Ph.D. processes. They experience identity shifts when there is a need for remaining advantageous. Relationships with supervisors involve different work styles, personality matches or mismatches as well as the perceptions of such a relationship. Each academic discipline provides a different landscape and climate within which my participants are able to learn, interact, and work. Yet, overall they were not vulnerable. Furthermore, cultural differences were not explicit issues. They indeed have similar doctoral journeys to general doctoral students; however, there were cultural expectations embedded in how they think and do things. Thus the experiences are extraordinary and distinct.

5.3. Extraordinary Components in Overseas Doctoral Students' Ph.D. Processes

This section discusses further meanings and significances particular to my participants' learning and living experiences and their identity evolution. My participants were not vulnerable beings who needed constant care and attention. However, there were times that they demonstrated the need for consideration of their overseas status. Also, they all were required to navigate cultural expectations as well as cultural norms and social codes embedded in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Their learning and living experiences hence illustrate extraordinary components in their Ph.D. process compared to the general doctoral students.

5.3.1. Writing and A Loss of Cultural Background

Doctoral students write to demonstrate their arguments, analysis, findings, and meanings of their research studies. My participants use English to conduct their writing and this feature of their Ph.D. process elicited issues that extended beyond their particular language level and concerns regarding their cultural identities. Coherent with Walsh's (p. 2010) assertion that the real issue in language for overseas doctoral students lies in adopting new modes or forms of expression, exploration, and explanation, my participants encountered such issues in their Ph.D. processes. Sophie grew uncomfortable as her writing became more and more distant from her cultural requirement; Karl felt dull writing in English compared to writing in German; and, Scarlett felt criticised and confused when she was reprimanded for using the English she knew and brought up with. In line with many scholars' findings suggesting that epistemological experiences are a crucial component of a doctoral student's educational pursuit (for instance, Gu et al., 2010; Hung & Hyun, 2010; Walsh, 2010), cultural differences embedded in language and writing were an issue for Karl and Sophie. Even Scarlett, a native speaker of the English language, found it very difficult to master the tone of the academic writing required of her and felt lost and uncertain. Doctoral students from other cultural backgrounds may feel uncomfortable, unacceptable, uncertain, and lost, as they make an effort to bridge the gap between differences in writing.

5.3.2. Views on Overseas Doctoral Education

Rather than romanticising overseas life, my participants expressed a realistic perspective about their overseas doctoral education. The discussion here raises concerns about the different ways to view overseas doctoral education. Many of my participants emphasised various gains and losses experienced in a number of

aspects of their lives on account of their decision to study in a different context for an extended period of time. Such views cohere with many studies focusing on study abroad programmes and students' experiences as well as international students' lives (for instance, Chambers & Chambers, 2008; Dwyer, 2004; Minucci, 2008). In Dora's case, despite the fact that she appreciated her supervisor being understanding and reassuring, she still preferred the role of supervisor as typically expressed in her home country, which she described as being more dominating than what she experienced with her UK supervisor. Because she was less dependent on guidance from her supervisor, Dora considered her increased academic independence and autonomy to be a result of her own personal growth. Dora's observation that the nature of the role of the supervisor in the UK is different than the role assumed by supervisor in her home country suggests that universities in the UK are failing to communicate possible differences in pedagogic philosophies that overseas doctoral students may encounter during their studies.

5.3.3. Family Remains A Strong Support System Despite Distance

My study finds that my participants' emotional equilibrium is supported strongly by a stable and close relationship with their family. This is in line with some studies that point out that family connection is important to overseas students (for instance, Fritz, Chin & DeMarinis, 2008). Such support, according to my participants, is maintained by frequent trips home and regular contacts. My participants who receive full scholarships have the financial liberty to afford regular trips to visit home (e.g., Mr. T, Bob, Karl, Jiyeon, Dora, and Sophie). However, Dora was greatly affected by the Syrian political unrest. It was not easy for her to visit home towards the end as compared to the first half of her doctoral journey. On the other hand, those who were self-funded (e.g. Denise and Scarlett) did not have the financial liberty to visit home regularly. The support from their families was not delivered in a face-to-face manner but by means of telephone calls and Internet contact. This highlights that financial situation can influence accessibility of family and home, the strongest support system to my participants. My participants did not

intend to distance themselves from home despite having fewer opportunities to visit home. Instead, they sought alternative means to maintain the connection and receive support. Also, they did not need to divest themselves of their intrinsic identities. When support system was not available or encountered breakdown, my participants' individual identities were affected. Thus, varying levels of support caused strong fluctuations in my participants' identities.

5.3.4. A Fluid Global Awareness

My participants' learning and living experiences demonstrated individual identity journeys in a cross-cultural context. Their identities in a global context were fluid and situational.

In contrast to some studies that suggest there is a predictable curve in intercultural adjustment (for instance, Savicki, Adams & Binder, 2008), some participants still encountered strong feelings of differences (e.g. Sophie and Dora) after they were immersed in the overseas environment for more than six months. In addition, some participants were capable of looking back at where they came from and receive critiques from a detached perspective (e.g. Scarlett, Karl, Denise, and Bob). This highlights that many of my participants were at ease where they did not need to go through the "maturing process" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 113). My findings show that worldviews are continuously enriched by unique learning and living experiences, and in turn, some participants learned more about the self via self-reflections.

Moreover, my participants indeed become more culturally agile (Chambers & Chambers, 2008) and developed an awareness of global issues (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Friedman & Antal, 2005; Gill, 2007). Differing from the results of studies that argue that doctoral students become global citizens (Belamy & Weiberg, 2006) and intercultural mediators (Alred & Byram, 2002), my participants performed and behaved depending on the situation. While I assert that many

participants demonstrate cultural agility, some of them, at the same time, had bound views regarding cultural and national identities. In particular, some felt undermined when confronted by certain cultural and national conceptions, stereotypes and situations that they did not wish to recognise or accept. For instance, loss of national prestige led to the impairment of Mr. T's self-perception. In such settings, individual identity was put aside and an 'ambassador' identity emerged that was responsible for asserting views that they wish to impart. In such situations, individuals were propelled voluntarily and coercively to fuse identities at once both cosmopolitan and parochial (Anthias, 2001; Rutherford, 1990; Bhabha, 2004; Soja, 1996). In this way, overseas doctoral education's empowering and hybrid ways of doing things enabled alternative positions to emerge (Bhabha, 1990).

5.3.5. Ambivalent and Emancipated Social Life

My participants' social lives were concerned with friendship and the deconstruction of social circles. This reveals that overseas education opportunity provided them time and space to go through an evolutionary process starting with ambivalence and then emerging to emancipation from their previous boundaries contained within their social lives.

Cultural expectations in friendship were not a salient concern among my participants who formed friendship based on interpersonal common grounds and interests rather than cultural differences. Their everyday social interaction is at an interpersonal rather than intercultural level. This suggests that they already have a very high intercultural and global awareness and have the qualities of being global citizens, (for instance, Belamy & Weiberg, 2006; Frieman & Antal, 2005; Gill, 2007; Kim, 2008). However, there was a sense of loss of friends and an element of avoidance emerging from their friendship experiences. In the cross-cultural context wherein they navigate their doctoral journey, my participants experienced provisional and impermanent friendship. Some participants felt lonely due to not

having close friends physically around (e.g. Dora). Some were frustrated and expressed a great sense of loss when friends left one after another based on their assumption that the friendship would end when one person was not present (e.g. Sophie and Denise). Some anticipated the possibility of temporary or provisional relationships and paid more attention to the maintenance of true friendship that would not be changed by distance (e.g. Karl, Jiyeon, Scarlett, and Mr. T). Others choose not to commit to relationships that were likely to be temporary and context-bound (e.g. Bob). Unlike findings in Fritz et al. (2008) anticipating feelings of loss and efforts at self-preservation were not limited to participants coming from certain parts of the world. Thus, the home countries of doctoral students do not determine whether individuals will experience greater or fewer challenges in the areas of socialisation.

Moreover, social circles are deconstructed. Cohere with studies highlighting that contextual factors create opportunities for new socialisation patterns to form (for instance, Byram, 2003; Byram, 2005; Côté & Levine, 2002), my participants established different lifestyles and formed different kinds of social relations. This is in line with the argument of "re-socialisation" (Byram, 2003). Some participants were happy that they were able to expand the social circles beyond gender and age boundaries embedded in their past experiences and culture (e.g. Scarlett and Jiyeon). Some experienced a sense of restriction due to image management (e.g. Karl). Some avoided socialising with co-nationals (e.g. Scarlett and Jiyeon). For these participants, being with co-nationals in a new environment seemed to remind them of the original social hierarchy, gender roles, and old power issues. Rather than seeking familiarity and comfort from co-nationals, as suggested by some studies (for instance, Chambers & Chambers, 2008; Minucci, 2008), they decided to keep a distance from the co-nationals.

My participants re-socialised and formed conflicting thoughts and feelings about friendship and social circles. While some participants were not able to free the self from image restriction, some managed to emancipate from boundaries of age, gender, and provisional and impermanent friendship. In this sense, there are two currents flowing through the socialisation narrative of my participants--self-

protection and self-development. These currents were influential in the construction of social identities, which were being hybridised by the simultaneously more open and more reserved attitudes toward fluid friendship exhibited by my participants.

5.3.6. Hybrid Identities

My participants underwent relocations geographically, culturally, linguistically and intellectually (Turner *et al.*, 2012). This meant that they vacillated constantly between multiple states and contexts. Hence, they were positioned in an 'in-between' state. They learned to hold back and sometimes step backward in order to move forward only after the ambivalent thoughts and feelings they experienced were clarified (Bhabha, 2004; Pitts, 2009). In this way, third space was asserted and hybrid identities were constructed. Hybrid identities here were the new identities my participants, overseas doctoral students, constructed along their overseas education journeys. Hybrid identities were formed by the experiences they encountered that lead them to who and what they became by the end of the study. Also, the concept of hybrid identities described "other positions" that emerged for enunciation of their presence and underwent ambivalence and emancipation (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). This hybridity was distinctive and organic to my participants.

The overseas doctoral journey creates a space and a period of time that is consistent with the third space perspective in that it encourages the students to "think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life" (Soja, 1996, p.1). My participants, for instance, Jiyeon, Sophie, and Mr. T, examined external situations and employed agentic power to change situations to their desired format. In this manner, they evolved in terms of their academic progress, personal life decisions and career directions from being a wife to an independent woman, from being less to much more assertive in writing her thesis, and from having more to less social life. They were constantly in the 'in-between' state

where identities go through negotiation and are reconstructed. Relocating to a different context meant that these individuals had crossed borders to experience the self as "Other" (Hall, 1990, p. 225). They found themselves positioned within the space between similarities and differences. Some studies have pointed out that such students encounter conflicting thoughts about learning styles, personal space, eating habits, dresses and even strange, new smells (for instance, Arrúe, 2008; Binder, 2008; Minucci, 2008; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). In this manner, culture becomes a salient issue (Savicki, Adams & Binder, 2008). My participants, for instance, Scarlett, Mr. T, and Karl, demonstrated that they explored their new place and established a relationship with it. In line with Hauge (2007) and Turner et al. (2012), my participants became agents to take care of external and structural changes. For instance, Scarlett and Sophie needed to take care of their needs to collect data for research and Karl, at the end of his doctoral journey, needed to show friends from his home country the place he lived for years for his Ph.D. These arguments suggest the links between agency and structure, as well as the internal and external dialectics. These links have everything to do with overseas students' intentions and ability to handle the changing structure (Haynes, 2008; Jenkins, 2008; McAlpine, 2012b).

The findings of my study illuminate the creation of hybrid identities. Denise's experiences were typical. She moved from a homogeneous background to study and live in London and for the very first time in her life saw many different kinds of people, smelt different flavours, heard different languages and tasted different foods. Further, she was also frequently asked the question, 'Where are you from?'. She wondered where the real British people who spoke real English were. Her life in London demonstrated a brand new life experience and functioned as a powerful reminder of her being an 'other'. Her studies and professional experiences in London gave her a chance to form a cosmopolitan worldview wherein having so many varieties in life is seen as a normal phenomenon. Her perspective was emancipated from the previous views that were formed in her homogeneous background. Her new cosmopolitan worldview was challenged when she moved again to a relatively mono-cultural town for her doctoral education. She understood this time that not every place had to be diverse and that each place had its own

characteristics. As such, her cosmopolitan worldview advanced through a process of destabilisation and reconstruction. Denise further found that she agreed more with certain social values learned from living and interacting with so many different peoples and cultures in England than the ones back home. It was a realisation for her to know herself more and to see these qualities develop as her own over time and across spaces. On the other hand, she experienced a sense of loss in terms of knowing where she belonged. She became rootless, not really belonging to anywhere. Be it cosmopolitan, rootless or certain, my participants experienced historical and cultural positions where they enunciated new narratives and arrived at hybrid identities (Hall, 1990; Pitts, 2009).

Jiyeon's marital discord also exemplified how hybrid identities were informed. Having pursuing education overseas both Jiyeon and her husband were put in a different environment to develop. Their mindsets and worldviews were negotiated, deconstructed, and reconstructed. They each were located in an in-between space separately and collectively. Jiyeon seemed to undergo deconstruction of the wife and couple identities and reconstruction of her individual identity, whereas her husband held to the husband and couple identities. In this sense, Jiyeon went through a journey of self-realisation. As such, her once obscure individual identity was given the opportunity to develop. The relationship change became one of the most significant experiences in Jiyeon's overseas educational journey. Jiyeon's experiences illustrated that there were times that she experienced emotional difficulties even though she is confident, mature, and competent. Whether being together or separated, overseas education led both husband and wife to develop under different circumstances. They were both positioned in the in-between space where they experienced conflicting thoughts and feelings. In the case of both Jiyeon and Scarlett, there was an emergence of an individual identity that outweighed previously applicable wife and couple identities. There was an emphasis on being an independent individual that provoked change. Acculturation also surfaced to be a salient issue in Jiyeon's marriage, in that, as husband and wife, they had different thoughts about the need to acculturate. In the in-between space there seemed to be a tug of war between norms and codes embedded in their home culture concerning divisions of gender, power, and autonomy between

the husband-wife and male-female. The dissolution of the wife identity signified deconstructions of Scarlett and Jiyeon's identities of being a woman, a daughter, a competent individual and a Ph.D. student. Before individual identity was reconstructed, both endured a challenging path of self-discovery and self-awareness.

Overseas education gives rise to fluid perceptions regarding home and family relationships. Home becomes fluid and can be hybridized in that somewhere else can be considered home. Distance from home, financial insecurity, and the demands of acculturation can contribute to feelings of disconnection, isolation and destabilization. These states are markers of lives positioned in the in-between space and developing in unfamiliar contexts. While seeing overseas education as transformative, the overseas doctoral students are empowered to reach different levels personally and academically. However, the emerging stability of one identity may suggest that other identities are being destabilised. The transition some doctoral students and their families make from inhabiting traditional familial identities to occupying peer-researcher identities can destabilise family relationships due to differences in generations and paradigms and become a barrier. Moreover, wife and couple identities can cease to function properly when disturbed by the emergence of an individual identity. Overseas study is also a journey of the self on a quest. The dynamic and fluid nature of the journey may destabilise established and newly formed relationships as they develop under different circumstances. The individual is radically changed by the experiences of studying overseas and the impact upon relationships from such radical changes can lead to crisis.

5.4. Concluding Remarks

My participants appeared to display a higher inclination to encounter the 'in-between' state. In Denise's case, her cosmopolitan worldview is first newly constructed when she experiences life in London. It is deconstructed when she

arrives at the town for doctoral education and reconstructed when she realises each place has its own characteristics. In Jiyeon's case, her marriage relationship was destabilised first by developing under different circumstances and then deconstructed at the point when she needed to lose the wife identity in order to reconstruct herself as a person. In other words, her individual identity was reconstructed. In Sophie's case, the traditional way of avoiding a personal stance in her academic writing was deconstructed. As the growth of confidence and autonomy in her study continues, her academic identity is strengthened. A new Ph.D. researcher identity is established.

Several studies discuss the space where individuals from different contexts encounter each other (Ikas, 2009 for example). Within this space different positions are being equally discussed. It is an exciting and, at the same time, worrying space due to its unknown future (Fougère, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). My findings suggest that overseas doctoral education entails empowerment and destabilization, and that over time and across spaces individuals encounter personal transformation. It is in line with Gu *et al.'s* (2010, p. 19) assertion that overseas students have more opportunity to experience this in-between state given that they are required to "adapt to new and sometimes threatening norms" in life as a whole person. It echoes Bhabha (2004), Ikas (2009) and Rutherford's (1990) arguments that it requires deconstruction of one's previous thoughts so that subversion and transgression are available. Only then can previous conceptions be reconstructed into another set of thoughts, feelings and identities. The deconstruction and reconstruction are consonant with the third space notions of ambivalence and emancipation.

Gradually, yet dramatically as well, the individual, academic, and community dimensions of the participants' identities experienced change and transformation. Academic, personal, and social lives do not influence overseas doctoral students independently and separately. Rather, their impacts are three-fold and closely connected. This is in line with previous arguments that identity is relational and that it goes through shifts and does not stop becoming (Burk & Stets, 2009; Erikson, 1980; Friedman & Antal, 2005; Jenkins, 2008; Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010;

Kim, 2009). Academic, personal, and social lives, in which cultural elements are embedded in ways of being, seeing and doing things, are intertwined and interrelated and impact upon the fusion of identities and identity evolution (Bhabha, 2004; Bulcholtz & Hall, 2005; Park, 2007; Rindal, 2010).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

It may be illuminating to begin this final section on a personal note. I set my heart on pursuing my Ph.D. in the UK after working for more than a decade. I was surprised at how homogeneous this part of the country was. The weather was too wet and too grey. The student population was 'unbalanced', dominated by those coming from certain parts of the world. I learned to put up with how people talk to me—loudly and slowly while staring at me—mostly because, before articulation, I had already been seen as an outsider who did not speak the local host group's language. Where once I was well recognised and had resources to enhance my profession, now I felt limited. I had earned enough to support my family, but now as a doctoral student I was in serious debt. At a surface level, overseas students may seem to be fine studying and living in a country where their language and research skills are recognised. However, upon closer review, one would learn various perspectives suggesting that the life of a overseas doctoral student cannot be categorised on a scale between very satisfactory and very unsatisfactory (Denzin, 2001). One reason it is difficult to do so is because the life of the overseas doctoral student is constantly changing. In this chapter I review and summarise the investigation and findings of this research, identify specific methods used, highlight implications this study has made, and make recommendations.

I initiated this study by arguing that overseas doctoral students' living and learning experiences inform how their identities transform over time and across space. In the field of international students' identity issues, there are studies focusing on adjustment and acculturation (for instance, Berry, 2008; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Gill, 2007; Gu et al., 2010; Kim, 2008; Milstein, 2005). Among them, sojourners, immigrants, university students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels are often the focus of study. Recently, scholars have shown interests in doctoral students' experiences and identities. Hall and Burns (2009), McAlpine, 2012b; Turner et al, (2012) are examples. My study responded to the needs for exploring implications of relocation for overseas doctoral students. From 2011 to

2012 I employed a longitudinal narrative enquiry utilising in-depth interviews that engaged eight participants coming from seven nationalities for a whole year. I invited my participants, overseas doctoral students, to return to the past, discuss present, and imagine the future. I constantly required them to reflect on their emerging perceptions with regard to their studies, personal life, and socialisation. Active listening, interactive in-depth interview, and my personal and emotional involvement elicited rich insights that allowed me to explore implications of studying abroad for overseas doctoral students' identity evolution. The following is intended to illuminate the implications of my research.

It Is Not A Matter of Time

Cieffo and Griffiths (2004), Gu et al. (2010), and Savicki et al. (2008) suggest predictable curves and timeframes for overseas students' adjustment to move into a less salient phase. However, there is no linear adjustment and acculturation. Rather, there is a need to factor in destabilisation that emerges from this study.

Many scholars (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Gu *et al.*, 2010, for example) argue that the length of time spent overseas influences sojourners in their academic and personal life. In particular, Savicki *et al.* (2008) note that after approximately six months, these individuals find it less difficult in terms of socio-cultural adjustment. Gu *et al.* (2010, p. 16) report that after three months, overseas students show growth in their "intercultural and academic confidence". These predicted timeframes were not the case in this study, perhaps due to the academic levels and diverse life experiences of the participants. Moreover, the findings of my study suggest that there are ramifications of overseas study for the formation of academic identities. Some participants were autonomous from the outset, some matured gradually, and some failed to make that transition until much later. Even among students with higher education level varying capacities and maturities were identified. Hung and Hyun's (2010) linear progression is, therefore, idealistic and misleading.

Making friends across cultural boundaries was not problematic among my participants. In fact, some participants were more inclined to form relationships with persons from other nationals precipitated by their "'equal' strangers" status (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 109) from which a fellowship formed. Moreover, their loyalty to culture and nation was easily provoked by others' comments. Such factors suggest that it takes much longer time than predicted for some participants to feel settled in their new surroundings (Byram, 2003). Furthermore, my participants demonstrated very high tolerance level toward other cultures (Gu *et al.*, 2010; Milstein, 2005; for instance). Nevertheless, some participants revealed having much lower tolerance for certain behaviours, values and beliefs embedded in the home culture context.

The implications suggested here point out that my participants were not different from other ordinary students, who have more mature attitudes toward community identities that they would like to identify with and show a sense of loyalty toward their countries and cultures. Supervisors do not always seem equipped to deal with those that need help developing a more mature identity. If the Ph.D. is seen as transactional, it may be that student consumerism is the obstacle to developing a mature academic identity. My study is indicative that host institutions do not overemphasize issues derived from cultural difference.

Being Empowering Is Not Always the Case in Hybrid Identities

Hybrid identities come in different forms. Many studies (for example, Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Friedman & Antal, 2005; Kim, 2008) argue that individuals who have cross-cultural experiences tend to develop awareness and competence related to clashes between cultures and become sensitive about cultural issues. This implies that such individuals are likely to form a cosmopolitan worldview and that the hybrid identities such individuals form would also have this cosmopolitan quality.

My participants' learning and living experiences echo Anthias' (2001, p. 628) reminder that cosmopolitanism is simply one of the possibilities of hybrid identities and that individuals when confronted with conflicting thoughts and feelings can alternatively choose to dwell "in a 'time warp'" in order maintain tradition and "nationalistic fervour or identification". The remarks of several of the overseas doctoral students in my study supported Anthias' assertion. When studying overseas, others can easily see one as representative of everything associated with their countries. Hence, Scarlett became the 'American'; Dora 'the Syrian'; and, Denise 'the Armenian', for instance. They become an ambassador, consumed by pride or guilt depending on the actions of their respective countries. In this sense, Karl the German was linked to the historic relationship with Britain and Germany and Dora the Syrian was forced into an awkward position of reconsidering her government's war with some of its own citizens. Assuming the role of national ambassador created a loss of individual identity for many participants. Some participants, after several years of experiences, were able to adopt a calm and settled attitude when confronted with presumptions of association with the culture and history of their home countries, whereas others remained committed to engaging with distracters and arguing for what they considered to be fair treatment or assessment of their countries' situations. These reactions illustrate that when overseas, doctoral students become emblematic of everything associated with their home country and find it necessary to defend it whether driven by pride or guilt.

My study then suggests that these participants learn to be culturally agile, that they are cosmopolitan beings, that such cosmopolitanism implies a sense of rootlessness, but that they, nevertheless, can be bound by a patriotic and nationalistic mindset. In this sense, hybrid identities have the qualities of being cosmopolitan, parochial and rootless at the same time. This way, hybrid identities have different forms and are situational.

A Past-Present-Future Dynamic to View Identity Evolution

This study argues that time construction, with its concerns of the past, present, and future, influences identity construction. While my participants' prior experience functions as a reference for assessing current conditions, past experiences together with present ones facilitate the formation of a path that can guide their future. It highlights the connection between historical, biographical, personal and even geographical aspects of participants' lives (Hall, 1990; Hue, 2008; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; McAlpine, 2012c). A past-present-future dynamic that views identity from an evolutionary perspective hence emerges from this study.

Past experiences and present situations are connected. The extent to which individuals want to open and reach out is highly connected to past experiences (Imahori and Lanigan, 1989). Findings from my participants confirm this notion and provide greater insights. For instance, Bob highlights his military service experience that helped him to deal calmly with the travel mishaps that plagued his journey to the UK, namely, cancelled flights, missed train connections, non-stop rain and travelling alone. In this sense, negative encounters were handled with a positive attitude derived from his prior "strategic skills" received from his training in the military (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 102). Spending one summer in Slovenia challenged Scarlett's American identity. She realized that Americans were not always welcomed and perceived positively, so ever since she attempted to behave more carefully in order to leave a better impression. Her new awareness was the consequence of "relocation" (Turner *et. al.*, 2012, p. 17) and her decision to behave appropriately was enunciated from a context that had a specific history and culture (Hall, 1990). Jiyeon's previous socializing experience with co-nationals was mostly based on favours in which she was asked to help with English language issues. Her social competence was not impeded, but her attitude in terms of interpersonal relationships with co-nationals became cautious. Affinity identity then is situational (Gee, 2000-2001). These cases show that prior experience influenced present encounters in relation to attitude, skills and awareness. In line with McAlpine's (2012b) argument that personal situations are taken into consideration, my

participants' prior experience in professional, personal, and social aspects has an impact on their behaviour, values, and beliefs in the present. However, it does not point to a decisive outcome. The past functions as a reference, not a set of fixed instructions for static situations. In other words, it is the lessons learned that matters.

My participants' different outlooks formed during overseas doctoral education show that the present and future are linked. Karl felt that life outside English- and/or German-speaking countries would not satisfy his life pursuits. He decided to seek professional opportunities in a geographical region that was within his comfort zone. Scarlett felt that overseas doctoral education emancipated her from marriage and a binding view of life. She felt that her outlook on life had been broadened and that her future career would not be limited to her home country or English-speaking countries. New lifestyles are formed (Arrúe, 2008). Sophie and Denise went from feeling timid regarding future career locations to feeling confident. They acquired the requisite skills for operating in different international contexts (Byram, 2003; Gupta, 2003; Kim, 2008). Even in Dora's case, whose career was set by her obligation to return to the university that funded her study, her profession as an academic would benefit from her newly constructed academic identity. Their lived experience provides tangible cases to the "significant long-term influence" in that their future life scope is broadened (Byram, 2003, p. 63).

Hue (2008, p. 232) suggests "moving 'inward', 'outward', 'backward' and forward'" to involve the internal-external dialectics and the relations between past, present and future is highly influential in the doctoral student's process of time construction. Focusing on general doctoral students, McAlpine's (2012b, p. 38) "imagined futures" can best explain time construction in the doctoral journey. In line with that argument, a past-present-future dynamic emerged from my participants' learning and living experience that influenced their identity evolution. Data reveal that the past is not fixed but suggestive. Past functions as a reference rather than a set path to follow. Under such a paradigm, the future is handled with previously acquired skills and awareness and with a more open and flexible attitude (Byram, 2003; Gupta, 2003; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003).

Overseas Doctoral Education is Part of A Life Journey

In the case of the overseas doctoral students in this study, their overseas education journeys are constructed based on their learning and living experiences. They have gains and losses in different aspects in life. Study in their cases is not the only important part that requires attention.

Erikson (1980) argues that in different stages of life individuals encounter identity formation and crisis. Identity is the process of "social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). It is also constituted by the positions "we take up and identify with" (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). While there are gains and losses in their doctoral journeys, my participants live and learn as whole persons under different circumstances. Mr. T realized that he needed to be more open-minded through a process of interaction and "silent doings" (Erikson, 1980, p. 109). His self-development became salient through identity negotiations. Identity is shown to be fluid. In Dora's case, for the first time in her life, her Syrian identity became more salient than her Arab identity due to doubts formed about the Arabic leagues. It was a period of time that her ethnic, national, natural, institutional and affinity identities were all in a state of flux (Erikson, 1980; Gee, 2000-2001). She felt that she did not want to share identity with other Arabs. She openly and explicitly asserted Syrian identity. A strong sense of self-protection emerged to defend negative opinions of her home country, and this reaction, to some extent, impeded her development of self in such settings. In Jiyeon's case, Jiyeon and her then husband individually went through a process of self-realization and self-discovery that began with destabilization (Ikas, 2009; Routledge, 1996). They engendered different "areas of development" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 103). For some of my participants there were two currents carrying them along -- protection of self alongside development of self. In some cases 'protection' in some ways impeded 'development', whereas in other cases 'protection' in some ways encouraged 'development'. They learned more about the self by discovering who

and what they are and who and what they are not in relation to others, environments and overseas doctoral education. This is consistent with studies that argue for the relational nature of identity construction (Bulcholtz & Hall, 2005; Park, 2007; Rindal, 2010) and for the notion that it is through "the discovery of otherness" that one discovers self (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 109). These participants' cases indicate that the personal quest is an ongoing process that becomes even more salient due to relocation and developing in a different context (Binder, 2008; Gu *et. al.*, 2010; Myles & Cheng, 2003).

Thus, overseas doctoral education expanded and changed the life scope for my participants allowing them to grow and develop. The process entailed empowerment that began with destabilization. Participants' perspectives and cognitive and emotional understandings in relation to knowledge, skills and strategies, although to varying degrees, were enriched and broadened (Binder, 2008; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). Moreover, the overseas doctoral experience was responsible for undermining personal relationships that, in some cases, led to a divorce. Alternatively, it was shown to manifest growth by facilitating the emergence of completely different political convictions. My participants' overseas educational journeys demonstrated gains and losses in different aspects of their lives that gave rise to an evolutionary perspective from which to view identity. The findings illustrate that academic study is simply part of the broader personal life spectrum. This way, my study suggests that overseas doctoral students should be considered as more than a 'student' who operates in some sort of vacuum having no personal life involved.

Contribution of My Study

This research conduct allowed my study to bridge gaps. My participants are diverse. They were not only doctoral students but they were also overseas doctoral students with different cultural and social capitals. I explored their identities evolving in different contexts. I revealed their evolution. Not only their academic

evolution but also their everyday experiences in relation to their personal and social lives, and in relation to the cultural expectations with which they were confronted in order to understand their identities. I examined their adjustment and acculturation. I also explored their hybridisation. My study responds to the need for a qualitative conduct that tracks individuals at the doctoral level to learn from their everyday lives so as to discover understandings of their transformation while they learn and live overseas.

Rather than one-off interviews or questionnaires, my longitudinal design allowed insightful concepts, perceptions, and experiences to emerge. An interactive interview styles further helped to elicit stories that provided background knowledge about my participants. My study incorporates my participants' retrospective and introspective experiences to learn about prospective views. My research design and conduct found that overseas doctoral students have similar experiences compared to general doctoral students. They have milestones to accomplish in research, writing, and working with their supervisor. Nevertheless, overseas doctoral students are, at the same time, very unique. My research concludes that each individual participant has a particular doctoral trajectory. While cultural differences were not the research focus, cultural expectations emerged from data to illuminate that English academic writing becomes a matter of cultural loss in some cases; that overseas doctoral education can be a transactional experience; that availability of family support has great influences on my participants' being; that global awareness is built, but it is fluid and can be situational; that they encounter conflicting and liberating thoughts and feelings regarding friendship; and, that they form hybrid identities that have different forms. In summarising my findings I would highlight:

- Feeling settled is not a matter of time.
- Being empowering is not always the case in hybrid identities.
- A past-present-future dynamic should be utilised to view identity evolution.
- Overseas doctoral education is part of a life journey.

My research contributes to studies of overseas doctoral students' experiences and their identity evolution, host institutions at the higher education level, supervisor's role, and a methodological conduct.

Overseas Doctoral Students and Their Journeys are Distinct

Cultural expectations are found in various aspects in my participants' learning and living experiences. In academic aspects they are found in perceptions of supervisor's roles, supervisory requirements, and academic writing. In social aspects they are found in social circles and ways of interacting. In personal aspects they are found in relationships with home and family. Although cultural differences were not the research goal, cultural expectations were found influential to the identity evolution of overseas doctoral students as they live and learn to develop and grow in a different context. Overseas doctoral students and their journeys are therefore distinct.

Overseas status is illustrated based on different forms of hybrid identities that describe intrapersonal evolution. The doctoral journey illuminates the relationships my participants have with self, others, and the environment. Home country situations emerged to influence personal being, students emancipated from the usual support systems while developing abroad, and cultural expectations informed hybrid identities. They underwent re-socialization, re-enculturation and acculturation. Also, they underwent identity deconstruction and reconstruction. When the spouse was involved, the situation was more complicated due to the fact that the spouse also went through such processes. In the different context, verbal and nonverbal interaction experiences took place to influence the constructions of new habits, worldviews and identities.

Overseas students' lives develop under different circumstances. They are tested on a daily basis and experience life in the different context as whole persons.

Academic study is only a part of the bigger and wider personal life spectrum. These students learn to be culturally agile and their hybrid identities reveal cosmopolitan, rootless and parochial qualities at the same time depending upon situations. Overseas doctoral students indeed are a student group worth exploring. The overseas status, together with the different learning and living experiences, points out that overseas doctoral students and their overseas education journeys are distinct.

Insights about University Support Structures

These students' overseas status made them peculiar in several ways. They had more opportunity to experience transient friendships, be positioned in the 'in-between' state, and encounter more changes in life due to developing under different circumstances and contexts. In so doing, my study demonstrated different ways to view a doctorate. It proved that it was possible to view a doctorate as an end in itself, namely, an academic qualification, or as a way of thinking and working that would help develop a model to be utilized subsequently in future careers. The former approach views the process of obtaining a doctorate degree as being primarily transactional in nature, while the latter approach positions the process of obtaining a doctoral degree as being dynamic in nature. Moreover, given the additional life experience and academic levels of these students, the institutions that host overseas doctoral students could benefit from following suggestions. Firstly, overseas doctoral students should not be thought of as operating in a single-faceted manner without having a life outside of their academic studies. In this sense, they should be seen as not only students, but also ordinary people. Host institutions should view them as whole persons and not overlook their personal lives. Secondly, cultural and national identities are salient in situations where students sense negative implications and dissonance between home identities and conceptions and those prevalent in their new overseas context, either experienced by themselves or expressed by others. In such situations, the dissonance experienced by overseas doctoral students invokes in them an urge to

argue causing them to take a longer time to feel settled in their new surroundings. However, this is not to suggest that the first and foremost difficulty experienced by overseas doctoral students is derived from cultural difference and socio-cultural adjustment just because of their overseas status. Specifically, the host institutions should recognize their particularity of overseas doctoral students and not group these students with 'postgraduate students' and 'overseas students' in a general way. In this sense, my study revealed that the construct of 'overseas student' is too simplistic. Students properly assigned such a label often have little in common with one another. Host institutions should attempt to embed them within the general student population rather than positioning them as 'the other'.

Supervisors' Influence on Doctoral Student

My participants spoke at length about their views of their supervisors. Many issues were raised in terms of their supervisors' influence on the formation of positive learning and working experiences. My participants had very different supervisory experiences. They needed academic guidance and appreciated that supervisors showed personal care with regard to the students' personal issues. This way, my research produces the following suggestions for supervisors. Firstly, academic guidance, constructive suggestions, and timely feedback are necessary. Secondly, showing some personal care can help to create trust between the Ph.D. student and the supervisor and promote a closer relationship. Thirdly, understand students' cultural backgrounds and the overseas student status is crucial to engendering trust. Lastly, supervisors should take students' personal issues into consideration in order to make appropriate suggestions. In so doing, students are reassured while the supervisor keeps an eye on students' academic progress. The supervisor's role illustrated here shows a variety of expectations of both an advisor and a mentor and problematises the separation of a mentor and an advisor. My study demonstrates that overseas students are not necessarily more vulnerable in the sense that they need more care. However, they indeed encounter more situations that require the supervisor to show more human care than the clinical

role and bound views would otherwise dictate. In other words, supervisors should attempt to unify the roles of a mentor and advisor in order to move beyond providing only academic guidance and strive to create a more holistic role for themselves. Such efforts by a supervisor will help ensure the establishment of a positive doctoral education journey for the overseas doctoral student.

Subjectivity Outweighing Objectivity

In this research that followed principles of active listening, interactive attitude, and personal and emotional involvement of the in-depth interview method, some implications related to methodological conduct were raised, in particular, some issues about the problem of objectivity. Given my own background, the participant-researcher role, and access, it was impossible to be objective towards my research and participants. I was in an interesting position in that I was not in the conventional position of an outsider seeking to give insider perspectives, but I was simultaneously a member of the group being researched. This natural empathy for my participants provoked by my being so similarly situated presented a risk of interpreting the experiences of others through my own perspectives. My role was based on my own background in international language teaching that precipitated my contact across several national and cultural contexts. My experience helped me to grow tolerance and sensitivity, but also resulted in the development of a specific lens of perception. As such, I needed to avoid overlapping the emotions of my participants with my own emotions, to be cautious with a mistaken resonance, and be wary of compromising analysis. Reflexivity from the outset and throughout ensured that empathy I felt for the participants outweighed the risks that my research could have been compromised. Moreover, the deep trust my position afforded me helped me to establish, gain, and maintain access. Nevertheless, access was not a blanket concept. Rather, as suggested by Levinson (2010), it had different levels and was an ongoing matter. Although my role and background initiated access, it was the rapport that developed between participants and researcher that sustained the evolution of this study. The high level of trust I

achieved with my participants reflected in the openness they felt in sharing their feelings and insecurities. They shared details of intimate and personal matters, including marital problems. In no way did these students present as originally vulnerable; however, some participants endured stressful situations with personal ramifications that, ultimately, made the issue of vulnerability a salient one. My study has illuminated that in qualitative research objectivity is highly problematic. Subjectivity, on the other hand, is strongly helpful in exploring particularity in a holistic manner.

Limitation

This research was initiated from my experiences in the first year of my doctoral education overseas. I observed my fellow colleagues and noticed that many of us shared similar experiences regarding academic requirements, communication issues with our supervisor and departmental staff, and everyday life outside campus. As my research design targeted overseas doctoral students like myself, there were limitations especially in the methodological conduct. Firstly, I was also a member of the researched community. This facilitated the possibility of my overemphasising cultural differences. My participants questioned my query in this regard, and helped me to refocus. Secondly, I was involved in the study as the interviewer and someone in the same life circumstance as the study participants. My personal and emotional connection to the community under study made me "a vulnerable observer, a compassionate witness, and a true companion" (Tillmann-Healy, 2006, p. 278). To release myself from psychological and emotional stress, intervals between interviews were utilised as a means for me to reduce emotional load and distress. Thirdly, my participants saw me as a friend, researcher, and in some cases, therapist. During interviews, data analysis, and time spent reporting my findings, my roles vacillated between researcher and friend. Despite the fact that uncertainty as to which role should be central became an issue at some points, I was able to successfully shift from studying 'them' as an outsider to studying 'us' as an insider. I was of course not a therapist to my participants. It was not my

intention to even act like one. My participants realised that having time, space, and a person dedicated to listening to their own stories made them feel unique. They did not need to feel guilty or selfish while still focusing on the self. Constant reflection, working hard to remain critical, and maintaining a rapport with my participants contributed greatly to the efficacy of my research design rather than limiting its positive effects.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research has always been exploratory, and identified structural variations that may be pursued in further research. First of all, since diversity is the strength of this study, my work illuminates that further work should occur with members of communities not included in this research or with individuals with families. My research provides a glimpse of the spouse's development by involving the spouse's acculturation in the processes of re-socialisation and re-enculturation. This reveals the existence of even more different perspectives to study while learning and living overseas. Secondly, a longitudinal work should take place. The scope would be more encompassing if the overseas doctoral students were involved from the beginning of their doctoral education to two or three years after it was accomplished. This would help ensure that a complete cycle of identity evolution would emerge and demand additional time for more in-depth reflection. Thirdly, further study might consider socialization with co-nationals when overseas, an interesting topic based on some dissonance between home identities and relationships and those when overseas as well as the need of some people to remain 'true to themselves' and not form friendships with people they would not befriend in their home countries.

Conclusions

Given that this study was a doctoral thesis that had a limited scope, I restricted the number of participant to seek breadth and depth. Working across cultural backgrounds was important as I sought insights into experiences of overseas students, but this was not set up as a comparison between cultural contexts. Rather, it was designed to highlight the diversity of the overseas students' population in the UK. Given the small sample population and the illuminative purpose, the findings may not be easily generalized to a wider population. Although the experiences portrayed here in this research would probably be recognizable to numerous overseas students, others may have had very different experiences. However, I was not seeking to discover universal patterns. My intention was to explore the experiences of specific individuals that raised interesting issues for other overseas students and also for host institutions. To my participants, the extent of the impact of studying abroad could have been so minor that they showed no awareness of it until questioned about it. On the other hand, it could have been so major that they would easily, without prompt enunciate the realization and the discovery of the changed self as an individual, a Ph.D. researcher and a cosmopolitan individual to a researcher without effort. Identity indeed is an ongoing matter.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Ethical approval form

UNIVERSITY OF
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Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Ying Ying Hsiang

Your student no: 590055915

Return address for this certificate: 9A North Street, Exeter, EX4 3QS

Degree/Programme of Study: 4 year PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Martin Levinson and Dr. Li Li

Your email address: yh275@exeter.ac.uk and nikkohsiang03@hotmail.com

Tel: 07760-928113

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) **to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:..**date:**......2011..........

NB *For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2011

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 590055915

Title of your project:

Intercultural transformation and personal evolution while studying abroad:
An illustrative and longitudinal investigation exploring foreign doctoral students' transformation and its impact on their evolution using an intercultural interaction lens

Brief description of your research project:

As more foreign students choose to study abroad, contact and interaction between cultures increase. This intercultural interaction in daily life may transform these individuals at profound levels including how they see themselves, ways of being and meaning making. Also, at personal dimension, they may become more aware of and more sensitive toward intercultural interactions. They may establish a way to integrate the tradition and newly learned values and become a global citizen. Doctoral programmes require especially foreign students to immerse in a different cultural environment, which may bring challenges to academic and personal lives. To fit in, changes may take place. Consequently, these changes may also have impact on their evolution at personal level. What changes do these foreign doctoral students undergo together with their personal evolution are the aims this study sets out to explore.

This longitudinal study designs to utilize qualitative method of semi-structured and interactive interviews enquiring into foreign doctoral students' retrospective and introspective point of views in relation to their changes while studying and living in the UK and the impact this study abroad experience has on the evolution in their personal dimension. There will be two phases for the data collection: Phase 1) pilot study and Phase 2) official study.

It is planned that semi-structured interviews will be conducted individually in both phases. In pilot study, the interview will take one to two times. The focus will be on testing research questions and interview skills. In official study, each participant will be interviewed four times over one year span with two to three months between the interviews. This is aimed to meet the goal of this longitudinal study that participants would be able to reflect on critical incidents that trigger the transformation and relate present to the past experience and their personal evolution. The reflection and relation are to be the foundation to explore how the participants transform and evolve.

Information provided by this research aims to inform the preparation of foreign students and the understandings and attitudes of educational institutions, personnel and policy makers toward foreign students.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The targeted participants in both pilot study and official study phases are foreign doctoral students studying in an UK university. They are foreign adults registered as full time doctoral students in this certain university.

Another point concerns the relationship between the researcher and the participants. As this is a longitudinal study based on ethnographic principles, real relationships will be constructed between the researcher and participants. This is to allow for a more democratic process to emerge.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) <u>informed consent:</u> **Where children in schools are involved this includes both head teachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document.** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access online documents:

The informed consent will be obtained from participants (foreign doctoral students) using the version downloaded from the GSE site before conducting the interviews. It will be ensured that participants understand the nature of this study, what the research will involve and how the research findings will be used. The participation is entirely voluntary. All participants remain the right to withdraw from the research at any given time and that data related to them will be destroyed.

b) <u>anonymity and confidentiality</u>

Based on the nature of utilizing semi-structured interview, there will be transcripts and audio recordings. It will be ensured that the information obtained remains confidential and for research purposes only. Pseudonym names will be used throughout the study and the information will be coded to ensure anonymity. All the records will be accessed by the researcher only.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Semi-structured interview is the data collection method and will be audio recorded and transcribed. The transcript will be read and verified by the participants. Their feedback will be highly valued and utilized. Anonymity and confidentiality will be carefully remained throughout the research. Electronic version of the transcript and the hard copies of the transcript will be deleted, destroyed and securely disposing when it is no longer required.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

Records of semi-structured interview will include audio recording and transcripts. Hard copies and electronic records will be stored securely and safely and accessed by the researcher only using username and password.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

As the research concerns identity related issues, there is a need for sensitivity. As the researcher, I will adhere to procedures recommended in such situations by Lee (1993), Oliver (2003) and Liamputton (2007), as well as adhering to codes established by the university and BERA.

The viewpoints of the participants, namely, foreign doctoral students, will be significant for future students who aim to study abroad and educational institutions that intend to attract more foreign students for a divers educational environment. Their views will be listened to with respect. Differences evoked with regard to individual and cultural background are to be treated as illustrations to the study purposes and will be highly valued.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. *You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

This project has been approved for the period: June 2011   **until:** Aug. 2013

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ....date:......14.6.11.............

N.B. To Supervisor: *Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference:............D.10.11.74.................

Signed:..date: 01/07/2011
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/

Appendix 2. Letter of invitation

<div align="right">July 1st 2011</div>

Dear Participant:

My name is Ying-Ying Nikko Hsiang (Student number: 590055915) and I am a doctoral student of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter. I'd like to invite you, a foreign doctoral student, to participate in my study because your participation will contribute to the studies in the field of intercultural interaction.

Title of my study:
Intercultural transformation and personal evolution while studying abroad:
An illustrative and longitudinal investigation exploring foreign doctoral students' transformation and its impact on their evolution using an intercultural interaction lens
As more foreign students choose to study abroad, contact and interaction between cultures increase. This intercultural interaction in daily life may transform these individuals at profound levels including how they see themselves, ways of being and meaning making. Also, at personal dimension, they may become more aware of and more sensitive toward intercultural interactions. They may establish a way to integrate the tradition and newly learned values and become a global citizen. Doctoral programs require especially foreign students to immerse in a different cultural environment, which may bring challenges to academic and personal lives. To fit in, changes may take place. Consequently, these changes may also have impact on their evolution at personal level. What changes do foreign doctoral students undergo together with their personal evolution are the aims this study sets out to explore.
It is planned that qualitative method of semi-structured and interactive interviews will be utilized to enquire into your retrospective and introspective point of views in relation to your changes while studying and living in the UK and the impact this study abroad experience has on the evolution in your personal dimension. The interviews will be conducted individually and will need to be recorded. You will be interviewed four times with two to three months in between. Transcript will be done and delivered for verification and comments as soon as each interview is finished. This is aimed that you would be able to reflect on incidents that trigger the awareness and transformation as well as relate present to the past experience and your personal evolution. The reflection and relation are to be the foundation to exploring how you, a foreign doctoral student, transform and evolve.
In order to ensure complete anonymity, personal identification is not required. Moreover, your participation is entirely voluntary and the information collected is for research purposes only. Finally, you remain the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.
I appreciate your participation greatly. I am more than happy to answer any queries at the email addresses at nikkohsiang03@hotmail.com and yh275@exeter.ac.uk or contact phone number at 07760-928113. If you have any concerns about the study that you would like to discuss, please contact Dr. Martin Levinson at m.p.levinson@exeter.ac.uk and Dr. Li Li at Li.Li@exeter.ac.uk.

Many thanks,

Ying-Ying Nikko Hsiang

Appendix 3. Transcription conventions.

Symbol	Example	Meaning
N: J:	N: And as usual, I would just start by asking you, how are you? J: Hahahaha. Oh gosh, that's such a difficult question.	Letter N indicated the interviewer Nikko. The participant/interviewee was indicated by the first letter of the pseudonym. Here, for example, it is J for Jiyeon.
…	Even my supervisors … one of my supervisors he's from China, so even in terms of interaction with the staff, it's not only just English anymore.	Three dots indicated short pause.
[8 seconds]	[8 seconds] In terms of kind of social life, I think, up until maybe a couple of weeks ago, I … I was really feeling … I felt that I really missed … yea.	Numbers in brackets indicated elapsed time in silence.
mmm; hmmm	Hmmm … I think so in a way because and actually this has been a very interesting issue.	The sounds made while thinking.
Em; em; Erm; erm; Em-huh; em-huh	N: Ok, it's working now. October 18th. This is our second interview and in between, lots of things happened. J: Em.	The sounds made to indicate confirmation.
WORD	J: EVERY TIME, EVERY TIME I meet someone!	Capital words, phrases and sentences indicate louder volume in sounds made for emphasizing.
[WORD]	[J CRYING]	Capitals words, phrases and sentences in brackets described what action.
Word and sentence?	What did your supervisors say about this?	Sentence blocked in white font colour and black highlight indicated questions asked and probed by the interviewer.
Word. Sentence.	Even my supervisors … one of my supervisors he's from China, so even in terms of interaction with the staff, it's not only just English anymore.	Sentences highlighted with yellow colour indicated meaningful units marked in pre-coding.

Appendix 4. An example of the cover page of the transcript booklet

Bob

Interview dates:

1	2	3	4
10/11/2011	1/15/2012	4/8/2012	8/29/2012

Personal information:

Nationality	Greek
Department	Business School
Gender	Male
Age group	Under 30
Educational background	➢ Undergraduate: Greece ➢ Master: UK (2010-2011) ➢ PhD: UK
PhD	2011-present
Note	➢ Completed 1 year compulsory army service required in Greece ➢ No professional work experience ➢ Scholarship funded ➢ EU student status

Contents

Appendix 5. An example of transcript and open coding

First interview transcript
Date: October 11th 2011
Length: 1: 44:16
Interlocutors: Bob (B) and Nikko (N)
Note: First interview

Transcript 1

Transcript	Note
N: So do you have any questions about how to do this? B: No, I'm ok. N: And you can choose a name that you would like to have because eventually I need to transcribe the interview. So, you can choose a name. B: Ok. N: So basically, we will be talking about how you are here. Ok, let's start. B: Ok. N: Right now you just began your PhD. B: Yes, I just started my PhD[1] although I am in the UK for one year for my masters.[2] N: And right now, if I ask you to describe yourself, to introduce yourself, what would you say about yourself at the moment? B: You mean if I am happy?[3] N: To describe, to have a short introduction about yourself. B: I am a person who doesn't talk too much. I'm not close to myself, but I don't talk that much.[4] I like work hard, reading. I don't like going out to clubs.[5] Maybe I am feeling too old for my age although I'm not too old. I'm 25.[6] For example, I hate Arena, Mosaic and this stuff in Exeter. So, sometimes for example, for my girlfriend[7], she feels that I'm like older, but I'm not.[8] N: 25 is very young. B: Yes, but as I said I don't like this stuff going out all the time. I like being home, studying, watching TV sometimes, not that much[5]. I don't know what else to say. I'm not very open to people. I'm closed to myself, but if I get to know the other, I'm ok.[9] N: In terms of making friends … B: How I make friends?[3] N: Yes. For example, now you are here and last year as a master degree student and now? B: For example, here, I have two friends more closed[10] than others,[11] but I cannot compare these friends to my friends you know I have some friends since I was one year old. These are my friends.[12, 13] N: From very young back home? B: Yes, very young. Another two friends or three from when I was in	1. Ph.D. phase 2. Past postgraduate education experience in the master's degree in the UK 3. Confirming my question. 4. Personality: don't talk much 5. Hobbies 6. Age 7. In a relationship with a girlfriend 8. Girlfriend feels Bob is like older person 5. Hobbies 9. Not very open to people. 3. Confirming my question. 10. 'Close' is a key quality of friendship 11. Friends here 12. Friends back home 13. Friends since childhood are friends 14. Friends from the army 15. Past army experience is positive and helpful

the army.[14] You know in the army you lived for one year, but in this year, youget more experiences in this year than you know a whole life.[15] Now in UK, I have two friends. I have many friends, but two close friends I mean.[10, 11]

N: How do you make friends if you said you are not very open to people unless they are very close? In the beginning, how did you start?

B: In the beginning, you know if we get to know each other, you would be my friends as well. But, I mean to become very close you have to go out together many times.[16.] You have to trust. Trust I think is the best feature in friendship. I trust these friends.[17]

N: Because I found out that many people, especially foreign students coming to this country, for myself I was thinking about my friends back home. And here …

B: I'm not thinking them. I am not thinking them because I know that these friends that I have back home they will be there for the whole my life.[18] So, wherever I will be, I know that I can call them, I can Skype them.[19] But, I am the person who if I had a problem, I try to solve it by my own.[4]

N: So, so far, since you come here, have you gotten any problems that bother you a lot?

B: No, not something special.

N: Ok, that sounds good.

B: Everyday problems[4], you know everyone has like how I'll pay my bills, like what is going on in the university if I achieve what I am supposed to achieve in my PhD. But from my experiences, I know that you don't have to stress that much because, for example, now I'll study my PhD and if I were starting and you are too stupid, you'll never achieve your PhD or it's too difficult, you will never achieve it, get it. So, you start and you know everyday you learn something and you know how to move to the next step.[20]

N: The reason that I said that I think about my friends because I was thinking about that in the beginning when I got here, it's a new environment for me. I am thinking about how I approach people and get to know people. Like you said, going out more times and then you build trust.

B: A relationship.[21]

N: A true friendship. And like you said, some people they are friends, but among them you find couple of them become very close to you and that is true friendship. They can be friends for the lifetime. I think in the beginning I was trying to approach many different groups of people here.

B: I didn't try this. I didn't try this.

N: In the beginning, how did you meet those people?

B: I just meet them. I didn't try to be good to get more friends. Everyone I meet, I just know it's good. I said something about myself, get to know each other[22.], but I didn't get into any society[23].

N: No, I didn't do that. Just some people from the class. Because I told you that the first year for my work, we were required to take another

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Margin notes:

10. 'Close' is a key quality of friendship
11. Friends here
16. 'Go out together many times' is a key quality of friendship
17. 'Trust' is a key quality of friendship

4. Personality: independent
18. Friends will always be there.
19. Ways to contact friends
4. Personality: independent and problem-solving oriented

4. Personality: calm and problem-solving

20. Learn and move forward as the attitudes towards doing the Ph.D.

21. 'A relationship' is a key quality of friendship

22. Be himself when meeting people
23. Not part of any of the university society

24. Direct entry to the Ph.D. without the need to take taught

master degree in Educational Research. In that class, we have taught modules and in the class, we get to know some of the classmates a little bit more and then we become very good friends. But for your PhD right now, you don't need to do that. B: No.[24] N: You only did that in your master degree last year. B: Yes.	courses with classmates

Appendix 6. An example of thematic coding: codes to categories to themes

Take Bob's interviews for instance. I applied thematic analysis to approach Bob's interview data. Open coding produced more than 140 codes from Bob's first interview. These codes were descriptive and closed to the meaningful units that were highlighted in the pre-coding step. Comparing and contrasting relationships between these codes, I managed to group them into 25 categories. I repeated such a step four times to analyze each of Bob's four interview data. I then compared between categories derived from each interview data analysis to explore their relationships and hierarchies. In so doing, themes specific to Bob emerged from our interview data.

Categories of Bob's 1st interview data	Categories of Bob's 2nd interview data
1. Ph.D. phase: just started the Ph.D.	1. Ph.D. phase: demands and requirements
2. Past post-graduate education in master's degree in the UK	2. Past experiences affecting current ways of doing things
3. Confirming my question	3. Personality
4. Personality: don't talk much	4. Hobbies
5. Hobbies: reading, watching TV, being home	5. In a relationship with a girlfriend
6. Age: 25	6. Support systems: friends here and back home
7. In a relationship with a girlfriend	7. Learn to advance
8. Girlfriend feels Bob is older	8. Cross-cultural interaction experiences in the discipline
9. Not very open to people	9. Cross-cultural interaction experience with co-nationals and other international
10. 'Close' is key quality of friendship	10. Education is highly emphasised
11. Friends here	11. Family values compared to that of UK
12. Friends back home	12. Personal connection in the home context
13. Friends since childhood	13. Love UK's multicultural environment and mindset
14. Friends from the army	14. Strategy in study
15. Praised past army experiences	15. Future career plans
16. 'Go out together many time' is key quality of friendship	16. Comparing local mindset to London
17. 'Trust' is key quality of friendship	17. Expectations of the supervisor's
18. Friends will always be there when needed	
19. Ways to contact friends	
20. Learn and move forward as the	

attitudes towards Ph.D. research 21. 'Relationship' is key quality of friendship 22. Be himself in social occasions 23. Not a member of any of the university society 24. Direct entry to the Ph.D. 25. An unbalanced student nationality composition in Bob's department	role 18. Expectations of student-supervisor relationship 19. Expectation of self as a Ph.D. student 20. Seek normality by wanting to have a job 21. Social circles 22. Ways to relax 23. Study affects his time to relax 24. Advice from veteran Ph.D. 25. Established network from prior education 26. Support provided by the department 27. Weather affects his being

Appendix 7. Themes emerged from individual participant's interview journey

Bob	Jiyeon
1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Linking past, present, and future 3. Supervision 4. Greece, UK, and Europe 5. Situations in Greece 6. Individual being 7. Socialisation 8. Bob's interview journey	1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Personality 3. Marital discord 4. Socialisation 5. Individual being 6. Comparing Korea and UK 7. Supervision 8. Linking past, present, and future 9. Jiyeon's interview journey

Karl	Scarlett
1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Supervision 3. Individual being 4. German, European, and British 5. Linking past, present, and future 6. The interview to Karl and Karl's interview journey	1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Supervision 3. Post-divorce issues and intimate relationship 4. Social life 5. Being an American 6. Linking past, present, and future 7. Scarlett's interview journey

Denise	Sophie
1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Supervision and availability 3. Individual being 4. Comparing Armenia and UK 5. Linking past, present, and future 6. Denise's interview journey	1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Supervisor and supervision 3. Individual being 4. Parents' academic experiences and influence 5. Cyprus, Greece, and UK 6. Linking past, present, and future 7. Sophie's interview journey

Mr. T	Dora
1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Student-Supervisor relationship 3. Individual being 4. Comparing Greece and UK 5. Linking present and future 6. Mr. T's interview journey	1. Ph.D. phases and demands 2. Supervision 3. Individual being 4. Being a Syrian 5. Syria and the western media 6. Linking past, present, and future

Appendix 8. My coding book

1. Ph.D. phases and demands	• Ph.D. phases • Student-Ph.D. relationship • Writing • Additional requirements and work during the Ph.D. process • Identity presentation
2. Supervisory issues	• Supervisor's roles • Student-supervisor relationship • Supervisory change • Availability of supervision
3. Socio-economic factors and social identities	• Impact of home on the student • Financial issues • Relationships, family, and marriage • Ambivalent social life and friendship
4. National and cultural identities developed overseas	
5. Socio-cultural adjustment	• Intercultural interaction experiences with British • Intercultural interaction experiences with the other international individuals • Impact of intercultural interaction experiences on the personal growth and development
6. Change over time and across space	• Emancipation from cultural norms and social codes • Supervisory change • From a student-supervisor to student-teacher relationship • Life changing events • Different outlook on life
7. Impact of being involved in this study on my participants	

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