Great expectations: exploring the hopes and experiences of international business students in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The number of international students coming to the UK to study has increased significantly over the past decade and while much has been written about their recruitment and retention, the development of a deeper understanding of the international student experience is often overlooked.

This thesis does two things; first it critically analyses the policy context and international student experience literature from a theoretical perspective concerned with transitional capital. Secondly, it offers an insight into the diversity of these experiences from the perspective of a particular cohort of international business students at a post 1992 UK university. Drawing on interviews with twelve students at the start and towards the end of their study, it explores how they are negotiating the transaction of different forms of capital during their time in the UK.

The study finds some diversity among this group, but also a consistently complex process of reprioritisation of different forms of capital, with some clear points of imaginative transition and consistent reference to the importance of family expectation and inter-student relations.

The multiple realities that emerge challenge current international student discourses which tend to assume that international students are a homogeneous group. This perspective needs to be revised to take account of the diverse reality and complexity of the international student experience.

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Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter 5: Participant profiles

Chapter 6: Learning and being an international student

List of tables:

Chapter 1: Introduction and context

1.1   Focus of the study

A diverse body of literature exists concerning international students. This ranges from the internationalisation of the curriculum, to study experiences, pedagogical issues, decision making processes, the impact of language competency and academic standards, inter alia. There is much emphasis on the operational aspects of recruiting and retaining international students, linked to income generation. This thesis plans to contribute to the existing body of research by exploring international postgraduate business students' experiences of studying at a post 1992 UK university. This perspective assumes that consideration must also then be given to how students adjust to studying in the UK.

My overall aim is to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of international postgraduate business students and therefore:

1.   *To identify the factors which contribute to their different experiences*

2.   *To critically analyse the most significant challenges involved in this transition process, using a capital framework*

3.   *To explore how these international students understand their identity in a foreign learning environment*

The first aim is interested in considering how factors such as age, work experience, country of origin, stage in family life cycle and other personal factors affect each of my individual participant's experience of living and studying in the UK. Literature concerning international student experiences often focuses on the effect of English language competency on both academic performance and the quality of the international student experience and so the impact of English language will be explored with my participants. The second aim seeks to apply a capital based framework to help explain how my participants articulate their most significant challenges. The framework will focus on how social and cultural capital is affected when students move from their home country and in addition the impact on inner-value capital, market value capital and intellectual capital will be evaluated. The final aim focuses on how my participants discuss how they understand their individual and national identity to have been affected by their international experience.

This study focuses on the subjective experiences of a group of twelve international postgraduate business students, as they negotiated their academic and personal lives in the UK over a nine month period from autumn 2008 until summer 2009. The rationale for selecting business students was that this provided a convenience sample, as I worked in the Business School. Furthermore, these are a particularly appropriate group of students to undertake research with as most have completed an undergraduate degree, as well as having some work experience and being business

students they are more likely to have developed an understanding of issues such as the impact of globalisation. My employment was located in the business school of a university based in the middle of England (henceforth referred to as Midlands University) and this facilitated both communication and access to these students. Evaluation of the academic background of my participants would indicate that they are typical of those international students who apply to post 1992 universities in the UK. In particular, my participants' country of origin was outside Europe, they had a level of English language which met the admissions criteria and they had the equivalent of a first degree.

This study is intended to have both policy and theoretical relevance. It is focused on the participants' understandings and interpretations of their environment as international business students. In these terms, what individuals say and do is shaped and influenced by the discourses inhabited and the norms and values associated with them. Therefore, as I discuss the narratives of international students in this study, both theirs and my subjectivity, inevitably influence the interpretation of their discourses. The research is interpretive ethnographic in the sense that it draws on the narrative interviews which are then interpreted through a theoretical lens. Behaviour and thereby data, are socially situated, context-related, context-dependent and context-rich. This chapter discusses key developments in relation to international students because in order to understand a situation, it is essential to have an appreciation of the context as situations affect behaviour and vice versa (Cohen et al 2007).

The international student experience can be viewed as a challenging subject to research given their ethnic and cultural diversity, in addition to affecting factors such as gender, age, stage in family life cycle, length of stay, personality, cultural intelligence etc. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that they are a significant student market and therefore research on different aspects of the international student experience, leading to a deeper understanding, has the potential to inform policy developments and HEI strategies.

The tension between cultural diversity and yet in some ways comparable needs (of HEIs) has been well documented with authors such as Marginson writing extensively on this subject. What this thesis does is contribute to that body of work by underscoring the relationships between the hopes and experiences of one cohort of postgraduate international students (from various backgrounds) in one HEI. Understanding both the diversity and similarities between expectations and experiences is important if HEIs wish to main and grow their international student recruitment.

1.2 Background to the study

Most UK higher education institutions (henceforth referred to as HEIs) are actively pursuing policies of internationalisation, seeking to reach out to global markets, to keep abreast of, and contribute to, global trends and to ensure the international

relevance of their teaching and research. The latest OECD (The Organisation for Economic and Co-Operative Development) report published in 2014, noted that as of 2012 more than 4.5 million tertiary level students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship. This report notes that this represents in excess of a fivefold increase over more than three decades as in 1975 there were 0.8 million international students.

Data from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (henceforth referred to as UKCISA) in 2014 indicated that in the UK in 2012/2013 there were 425,260 international students studying at 163 publicly funded higher education institutions, representing 18% of the student population. There were also 53,000 international students studying at 159 alternative providers, 70% of whom were studying at undergraduate level. Furthermore 570,000 higher education students were studying for a UK higher education qualification at institutions abroad or via distance learning. This growth has accelerated during the period mirroring the processes of economic and social globalisation. HEIs today are increasingly competing for international students in response to trends in global student mobility, diminishing university funding and government-backed recruitment campaigns. One key element of this internationalisation strategy concerns the increasing focus on the recruitment and retention of international students.

One difficulty in developing an analysis of international students lies in the definition of what constitutes an international student (Bolsmann and Miller 2008). In the UK, a distinction has often been made between international students, designated overseas or foreign students and EU students (used here to refer to both the European Union and the wider European Economic Area), including British students, on the basis of the differences in fee regimes. EU students usually pay the same fees as UK domiciled students in UK universities. International students (including those who originate from European countries who are not members of the EU such as those from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) have often in the past paid significantly higher fees. For example, at Midlands University in 2014/2015 a UK/EU student would have paid Master of Business Administration (henceforth referred to as MBA) fees of £9,170, while an international student would have been required to pay £12,800. The tuition fee increase implemented in autumn 2012 now means that this disparity in fees has in some situations decreased significantly but in others there is still an international premium. In this narrower definition of international students, used by university administration, there is emphasis on the financial and economic aspect of the recruitment of international students. It should be noted that the term international here and throughout this thesis is used to refer to those students who originate from outside the UK and EU.

I began this study of the international student experience in autumn 2008, when working as an international partnerships manager in Midlands University. My motivation was a personal one. As an undergraduate business student in the late 1980s, international students were a rarity who were regarded by some students and staff, with a degree of suspicion. Few of my peers had any significant contact with

international students from outside Europe and for teaching staff there was concern regarding the lack of understanding of previous educational experiences of students from such diverse cultures as Fiji and Greece. This situation has now changed beyond recognition in most UK universities, with, in my experience, some postgraduate award cohorts in particular, consisting almost entirely of international students. This dynamic environment has been affected by continuous policy changes affecting higher education as governments have sought to achieve differing objectives.

There are compelling internationalisation arguments for increasing the recruitment of international students. These include diversity within the student body, sharing best practice with those from different and developing economies, enhancing the international profile of the institution and supporting the internationalisation of the curriculum (Marmolejo 2012). At the same time there are financial advantages related to the recruitment of international students who can pay, on average a 30% – 50% premium for international fees (Burns 2013). These international students can help to balance the inevitable recruitment shortfalls that have resulted from the changing UK student demographics, increased global competition and the impact of higher tuition fees (Henard et al 2012).

Having recruited, taught and supervised international students for more than two decades, this study originates in a personal and academic curiosity concerning international student experiences while studying in the UK. My own experience of working with international students raises doubts about the appropriateness of a UK postgraduate business award for some international students, in particular for those from developing economies such as China, India and Sri Lanka. My informal observations indicate that some international students find the experience isolating, financially strenuous, emotionally and academically stressful and sometimes unrewarding. The experience in my university is that an increasing number of international students perform poorly when compared with their UK counterparts, with many having to undertake extensive and expensive resits. Poor performance potentially prolongs their stay in the UK and as such has significant financial implications and at the same time may result in disappointment from supporting families. These additional costs can be attributed to for example, fees charged for resits and also the charge to extend an international student visa which has risen from £144 for a postal application in 2013 to £422 as of January 2015 (www.gov.uk).

Changes in higher education policy by successive governments have resulted in significantly reduced financial support for both HEIs and students with an expectation that institutions will need to be capable of financial independence in order to survive. The former UK New Labour government stressed the importance of the university sector taking more responsibility for their financial health, while at the same time significantly widening access and participation amongst all key target groups, including international students. The current coalition government has expressed caution concerning the immigration issues linked to international students and as of 2013, it has imposed further restrictions on study visa applications. The additional

checks brought in included enhanced English language requirements and the imposition of "credibility check" interviews (Adams 2013). These changes are set against a backdrop of known cuts of 6% in government funding for higher education teaching and the likelihood of further cuts in the future (Adams 2014).

These changes also have implications for international students considering study in the UK. Governments have moved from an earlier perspective of encouraging and indeed often subsidising students from overseas to study in the UK, as a form of colonial or postcolonial aid and encouragement of trade in goods and ideas, to a position which now sees education more as a commodity. The emphasis is now more on the contribution international students' fee income makes to the prestige and income of individual universities and the contribution their wider expenditure makes to the UK gross national product. International student income data from Midlands University illustrates the dynamic nature of the market as international student tuition fee income has decreased over the past four academic years:

Table 1.1: Midlands University tuition fee income 2010/2011 – 2013/2014

	2010/2011 £000	2011/2012 £000	2012/2013 £000	2013/2014 £000
Overall academic fees	44,732	46,649	50,301	59,961
International student fees	6,954	6,651	6,734	4,883
Proportion of fees from international students	16%	14%	13%	8%

There is certainly evidence of intense global competition amongst UK, US and Australian universities in particular for international students both on campus (in the host country) or like Nottingham University for example in their overseas campuses in Malaysia and Ningbo, China; Glasgow Caledonian University in Oman and Heriot Watt in Dubai. These collaborations mean that the UK HEIs offer their awards in the students' country of origin or via a franchise (with a local HEI) or off campus via blended or distance learning programmes. Associated with this, there has been more sophisticated marketing, publicity and new contractual agreements and attempts to harmonise qualifications across national boundaries, such as the Bologna declaration which has focused on qualifications frameworks, credit transfer and ratings across Europe. Such developments would suggest that the flow of international students to the UK will continue to rise with shifting regional fortunes, the influence of the media

industries and the dominance of English language, however the international student market is dynamic.

Some of the key source countries for international students coming to the UK such as China and India are investing heavily in their domestic higher education systems, making study abroad less attractive for some potential students, particularly at undergraduate level. For example the Indian government has a five-year plan to reform higher education which aims to create 40 million new university places and train 500 million people by 2020 (Shaw 2014). Selected institutions in countries such as Germany, Holland and Sweden offer an increasing range of awards in the medium of English and attractive incentives such as free public transport to students in Holland and much lower tuition fees than the UK. This has resulted in those international students wishing to learn in the medium of English having more choices than ever. Vickers and Bekhradnia (2007) noted that Germany encourages international students by offering very low cost fees so that their 250,000 international students cost the state upwards of £1 billion but the government is willing to pay universities to enrol these students because of the greater, long term benefits they bring. The German university system is mainly subsidised by federal government and Germany has been named as the most supportive country for overseas students, in an international league table (Coughlan 2011a).

Despite a rhetoric of the importance of evidence-based practice, these discussions and initiatives such as PMI1 and PMI2 (Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education), to encourage the internationalisation of higher education provision in the UK, have been based on limited research (Brooks et al 2012). PMI1 was launched by Tony Blair in 1999 with the aim of increasing the number of international students in the UK. The target of an additional 50,000 international students in HE was exceeded with an extra 93,000 in the given time period and the FE target of an additional 25,000 was just missed with 23,300 additional enrolments (Kingston 2009). The second phase was launched in April 2006 with the aims of increasing international student enrolments in HE and FE as well as improving international student satisfaction and achieving growth in international collaborations (Merrick 2007).

There has been especially limited research undertaken concerning the progress and achievement of international students and their subsequent careers and mobility, despite some recognition that a major consequence of overseas study can be a "brain drain". Expensively trained graduates from low income countries often prefer to remain in the UK or Europe and pursue their careers in the West, where their earning potential and associated lifestyle may be perceived to be preferential to their country of origin (Adnett 2010).

Growing numbers of international students have provided an increased cultural diversity reflected, for example, in the languages spoken and the range of student organisations and national cuisines available on-campus. This is especially the case for the postgraduate management awards at Midlands University, with the majority of

students coming from rapidly developing economies such as India and China. My experience of these business students suggests they are eager to gain what they consider to be advanced and contemporary western qualifications (Ivy and Naude 2004).

In addition to educational services, international students are significant consumers of accommodation, food and drink, transport, entertainment and healthcare. A research paper from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills entitled Estimating the Value to the UK of Education Exports (June 2011) stated that in 2008/2009 international tuition fee income to the UK was worth over £4 billion, with £2.4 billion being attributed to the HE sector, £139 million for FE and £880 million for English language tuition. The same report estimated that the total value of UK education and training exports to the UK economy was around £14 billion, with a projection that this could rise as high as £26 billion by 2025. A more recent comment from an April 2014 Universities UK report estimated that in 2011/2012 overseas students studying in the UK, paid £3.8 billion in tuition fees and accommodation and helped to create an additional 136,639 jobs in the education sector. As such it is clear while there is no consensus as to what the total income from international students is, it cannot be doubted that it makes a significant contribution to the UK economy.

While much has been made of international students as a revenue stream, it has only been relatively recently that the financial impact of a period of international study on lifetime earnings has been evaluated. The 2012 Department for Business Innovation and Skills, research project concerned with tracking international graduate outcomes, found that the average salary of a 2010 UK graduate was £20,000 six months after graduation, while the salary of an international graduate with a UK undergraduate degree, working in the UK six months after graduation was £24,462. This finding suggests that employers place a premium on graduates whose experience and education demonstrates a sense of global context and this premium is close to an additional 25% on the average graduate salary (BIS 2012, research paper 62).

In addition to economic value, the UK also benefits from international students through the global connections which they generate and it is interesting to note that many of the main source countries are also key export markets and foreign policy priorities, including China and India (HM Customs and Revenue 2013). Vickers and Bekhradnia (2007) referred to a study which identified the benefit to exports of large numbers of people abroad who have lived in the UK and are familiar with UK brands. Furthermore, they found that there is the benefit to international relations and diplomacy of having highly placed elites in other countries, who have spent some of their formative years in the UK and they also found that the fact that universities spend the majority of their income on staff salaries means that a large proportion of income earned from international students will be received by government in the form of income tax.

Over and above the financial revenue international students bring, there are other benefits such as the pedagogic dynamic that come from their contribution to a multi-

cultural learning environment. International students are not only a valuable financial asset to universities in developed countries but they are individuals who also enrich these countries with their diverse heritage and perspectives, serving to increase cultural awareness and appreciation (Smith and Khawaja 2011). International students bring with them a wide range of knowledge and skills across many disciplines, thereby contributing to the intellectual capital of their host country and potentially adding to the workforce. Whilst the long-term benefits of this cross-cultural fertilisation, such as enhanced mutual understanding and increased future trade, may be difficult to quantify, it is possible to be more precise about the short–term benefits as the provision of educational services to international students generates export earnings.

Over the last decade, universities have used international student income to substantially expand capital works, thus enhancing their asset values and their ability to generate additional income from these facilities. It is the international student income that is enabling some universities to invest, expand and survive at a time of huge financial pressure (Shepherd 2009). In the same article the director of the Higher Education Policy Institute is quoted as saying that while the large fee income from overseas students has helped to offset the costs of higher education in the UK, it has also made universities vulnerable because they are now heavily reliant on it.

In May 2012, the then universities minister, David Willetts, launched UK Education Services (UKES), a new unit of the business department, with the intention of helping to sell British education suppliers to foreign governments (Custer 2013). This interest could be considered to be as much economic as educational with education being increasingly considered an export industry whose global reputation can be used to increase revenue (Elledge 2012). The aim of this initiative was to encourage the establishment of overseas campuses owned and managed by British universities in order to help counteract the impact in the UK of changing migration patterns and unfriendly international student visa policies. These international campuses can also be considered to be supply chains, one of whose objectives would be to encourage progression onto the final year of an undergraduate degree or postgraduate study, at the UK campus.

Some of the most successful international students may wish to remain in the country of study, after completing their award and such immigrants can help to sustain developed countries' competitive advantage in high technology and university education workforce intensive sectors of the economy (Adnett 2010). It was only as recently as 2009 that the OECD, in its Education at a Glance report, noted that the growth of the knowledge-based economy and increasing global competition encouraged governments in Australia and Europe for example, to actively target international students as part of a broader strategy to encourage the selective immigration of skilled workers.

Hence it is clear that international students make a significant contribution to both UK universities and the wider economy and that contribution has grown rapidly over the

last decade. Nevertheless, the market is volatile. Although UK universities have benefited from the rapid growth in international students over the last decade, there is no guarantee that this growth will continue. Reasons for this include increased competition for international students from other countries such as Australia, whilst many of the developing nations that have supplied students to the UK in the past such as India and China, are rapidly expanding and professionalising their own HE systems. Changes in tuition fees and fluctuating exchange rates may also be relevant. The decrease in EU students may have been a signal of the sensitivity of the market to movements in exchange rates and increased tuition fees, as well as the impact of EU enlargement (Universities UK 2010). These factors, together with increased consistency and portability of university degrees amongst many European nations under the Bologna Process, have resulted in UK universities working increasingly outside Europe in an attempt to maintain competitiveness in this sector.

1.3   Significance of the study

This study comes at a time when the contribution of international students is under intense debate. From a university sector perspective, the combination of decreased government funding and the introduction of often significantly higher tuition fees, alongside intense competition, means that international students provide an essential income stream, while supporting the objectives of the internationalisation agenda. A further key influencing factor has been the imposition of a cap on recruiting UK students from 2009 which has not been extended to international students (Lipsett 2009). In the autumn of 2013 it was revealed that an additional 30,000 university places would be available in 2014/2015 as an interim measure before the cap is abolished in 2015 (Morgan 2013).

International students are now represented in the media as cash cows at best and at worst as potential illegal immigrants or suspected terrorists (Laville et al 2009). The imposition of compulsory police registration for international students from countries such as China, only serves to reinforce the perception of discrimination in what some parts of the media have dubbed "Fortress Britain" (BBC 28/09/10). The focus of this research is to explore the international student experience and in particular consider how international students negotiate the transaction of different forms of capital, while studying for a UK postgraduate award in business.

1.4   Policy context

1.4.1 The Labour administration 1997 – 2010

The last Labour government was committed to the expansion of the UK higher education sector with the aspiration of seeing 75% of all under 30s, studying to degree level, either by vocational training or academic study (www.labour.org). During the last year of the Labour government more students had enrolled on university awards than ever before, up by 392,000 in 1997 to 2 million in 2008/9, an

increase of around 24% and the Labour party website claimed that public funding had increased by 25% in real terms. The website also stated that postgraduate enrolments increased by 36% during the Labour administration.

Widening participation in further and higher education, particularly for those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds was a key policy in the Labour education plans (Gill 2008). This was supported by the introduction of the means tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), offering up to £30 per week to means-tested further education students to help with study costs such as travel and books (Murray 2010). This was accompanied by a guarantee of the minimum level of maintenance grant and loan if students progressed to higher education. There was evidence to suggest that the gap in participation rates of young people between the top three and bottom four socio-economic groups did fall from 27.2% in 2002/2003 to 20.2% in 2007/2008, with 87.4% of first degree enrolments coming from state schools (Chowdry et al 2008).

The PMI2 scheme was developed in association with UKCISA in order to provide higher and further education institutions with the opportunity to develop innovative projects aimed at improving the quality of the international student experience. A total of 39 institutions took part in a variety of projects such as mentoring, buddying and community-related activities. Projects incorporated new technologies, employability-focused work and projects concentrating on supporting specific groups of international students such as those working towards a PhD, disabled students and those with English as a second language (UKCISA 2010). Funding for this scheme was relatively modest at £170,000 over 3 years and the results were concentrated on the development of support services for international students.

PMI2 was seen to be a contributing factor to the university sector's internationalisation agenda. At a Downing Street reception for international students and programme sponsors to launch PMI2 in 2006, the then prime minister, Tony Blair was quoted as saying:

"It's not just about getting students to choose UK universities and colleges. It's about building sustainable partnerships between our universities and colleges and those of other countries. We want to see many more shared research projects, shared courses and joint degrees: we want to see more exchanges of students and academic staff: we want UK education to become genuinely international". (UKCISA 2010).

Alongside the increase in HE participation in terms of volume, a critical factor in the UK's growth in this sector has been in the curriculum offered in collaboration with local further education colleges, attracting a diversity of students from a wide range of backgrounds. The Midlands University is no exception to this and it collaborates with a consortium of regional colleges with the objective of supporting the expansion of their HE provision. The financial drive to balance budgets, alongside the desire for diversity in the student population to address the internationalisation agenda, can

mean that the proportion of international students can be seen as a mark of quality for HEIs such as the London School of Economics and the School of Oriental and African Studies, both of whom have derived around a third of their income from international students (Bolsmann and Miller 2008).

1.4.2 The Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition administration May 2010 – May 2015

The impact of policy on international student mobility into the UK can be demonstrated by consideration of the number of visas issued to international students. International student visas increased by 35% to 362,015 in 2009 (BBC News 07/09/10), while figures from the former immigration minister Damian Green in June 2012, indicated a reversal of this trend with a reduction in student visas of 30% compared to the same period in 2011 (Coughlan 2012). Damian Green stated that the figures were proof that the coalition government had inherited an immigration system that was largely out of control. Internal Home Office estimates that showed that more than 90,000 international students were coming to the UK every year to enrol on courses below degree level at private institutions. The desire of the coalition government to reduce student migration can be seen in the latest discussions concerning international student visas which referred to the proposed cessation of the 4 month period following completion, when international students can remain in the UK to look for employment. Countries like the US, Australia and Canada have a post-study work visa of 12 months, so already significantly longer than the four months currently offered under UK policy (Dean 2015).

In my view, the issues surrounding the funding of higher education have been contentious for some time. A polarised debate has been ongoing, with those on the left arguing for free education to encourage widening participation and decrease the gap between graduates and non-graduates. This has contrasted with those on the right who have argued that higher education needs to be self-funding and as such students, irrespective of their country of origin or personal circumstances, must make a significant financial contribution. By switching from a policy of spending to one of lending, ministers had hoped to maintain the level of resource available for universities and contribute to the deficit reduction at the same time. Recent research would indicate that this may not be the case due to the high level of student loan defaulters (Malik 2014).

The continued cuts in UK university funding and the promise of more to come have provoked strong responses from a variety of stakeholders (BBC News 07/09/10). In this article, the president of Universities UK expressed concern that a continued reduction in funding would inevitably result in UK universities being less competitive than their international rivals, many of whom were investing in higher education as a means of escaping the recession. The head of the UCU (University and College Union) warned that continued cuts would result in the UK plummeting down the graduate league table. The OECD report, Education at a Glance, published in August

2010, noted that between 2000 and 2008, the UK fell from third highest to fifteenth among the top industrialised nations for the proportion of young people graduating.

To put this in context, the same OECD 2010 report noted that the proportion of the UK's young population graduating lagged behind countries including Poland, Australia, Ireland, the Slovak Republic, Portugal and the Czech Republic, as well as the traditional high performers such as Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway. The implications of this were evaluated by Andreas Schleicher, the OECD's special adviser on education, as reported by Coughlan (2010)*: "Fewer people with qualifications will mean a less successful economy. Cutting education is going to cut the tax returns of the future".* This last comment is substantiated by a further finding of the 2010 OECD report that in the UK each extra graduate brings an average of £58,000 to the tax system over their working life.

All international students at UK state funded institutions are required by law to pay no less than the full cost of their education. UK and EU students currently pay from around £6,000 to a maximum of £9,000 annually for an undergraduate award and non EU students can pay several thousand pounds more. For example at Midlands University for the academic year 2015/2016, one year of tuition fees on an undergraduate Business degree will cost a UK or EU student £9,000 and an international student £10,500, representing a premium of £1,500. For an MBA at Midlands University, a UK or EU student would be expected to pay £9,170 and an international student £12,800, a difference of £3,630.

In September 2010, Cook, writing in the Financial Times commented on a report from Universities UK which indicated that at least 29 institutions ran a financial deficit in 2008/2009 which was around twice as many as the previous year. The expectation was that there will inevitably be closures and mergers with David Willetts, the former universities minister, declining to contradict this prediction, saying in the same article in September 2010 that the government: *"… cannot guarantee the continued existence of every university*".

Damian Green, a former immigration minister, indicated that he was keen to make the reform of the student immigration route a priority (BBC News 07/09/10). One of his proposals included the setting of an additional bond for international students which would be repaid on completion of their award. International students already have to demonstrate access to considerable financial funds in order to satisfy the visa authorities and the imposition of a further financial penalty is unlikely to be considered welcoming.

This decision follows the publication of a Home Office study which tracked non-EU migrants who came to the UK in 2004. The largest group, some 185,000 people, were students and 21% of these were still in the UK in 2009. These data are discussed by UKCISA (2010) who reported on research released by the Home Office in September 2010 which showed that of those who were still resident in 2009, 6% were continuing students. This report found these students were enrolled on long

courses such as medicine or represented those who had taken a series of courses such as A' levels followed by a degree. The balance of 15% had either married a UK citizen or moved into a recognised work category. Vickers and Bekhradnis (2007) estimated that the increase in GDP arising from the presence in the UK of non-EU students who then go on and work after graduating was at least £1 billion per year. Concerns at the possibility of a change in government policy were expressed by Sally Hunt, general secretary of the University and College Union: "*Populist policies on immigration might play well domestically, but on the global stage we risk looking foolish"* (Whitehead 2010*).* It was ironic to note that the speech made by Damian Green on 07/09/10 was made following a visit to India where he encouraged Indian students to study in the UK.

In a speech reported on the Conservative Party website on 6th September 2010, Damian Green focused on international students who remain in the UK. He took what I would consider to be a rather elitist line:

"… *most people think foreign students come here to attend our top universities and of course these are the students we want to attract. But the real picture of the parts of Britain's education system that attract foreign students is much more varied. It includes the publicly-funded further education sector, the private vocational colleges, language schools, independent schools and many partnerships between higher and further educational institutions. The foreign students attending these various establishments may, or frankly may not be, the brightest and the best".*

I would suggest that university is not only for the brightest and best UK students and as such the same spirit of widening participation and encouraging access should apply to all students who meet the admissions criteria, as to contemplate any other admissions process would inevitably result in discrimination. Furthermore, this comment questions the autonomy and indeed integrity of those involved in the admissions of international students, raising potential concerns about the level of government influence in operational activities in educational institutions.

It is against this background of continued political rhetoric about "abuse" reducing net migration that a former minister for immigration, Mark Harper (2013) announced plans for reform in the sector. In March 2013 plans were confirmed to split the UK Border Agency into two separate entities, with one focusing on immigration and visas and the other taking responsibility for immigration law enforcement. Then in the 2013/2014 session of Parliament there was a proposal to introduce a new Immigration Bill, which was supported by plans to modernise information technology across the whole immigration system to improve efficiency. The former two year post graduation work visa was replaced by the Tier 2 visa which offered international graduating students an opportunity to continue to live in the UK, so long as they secure a graduate job with a salary in excess of £20,300 per annum. There was also a new scheme in place from summer 2013 for 1,000 MBA students to remain in the UK for one year on a Tier 1 visa.

It is recognised that there is a gap in data concerning what international students do after they have completed their studies and in 2010 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills asked a commercial organisation, i-graduate, to undertake a research project to investigate the geographic and occupational destinations of non-EU international students who graduated from UK HEIs (BIS research paper 62 2012). The results of the study were published in early 2012 and included reference to UK-educated international graduates achieving markedly higher average salaries than those entirely educated in their home country.

The former UK Border Agency (this was closed in 2013 and is now known as UK Visas and Immigration, UKVI) relocated responsibility for the monitoring of international students to the institutions in which they were studying. Institutions who had issued the Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) were required to monitor attendance to ensure that students were actively attending and participating in the award for which their study visa was granted. If institutions did not monitor and record attendance effectively, they could lose their licence which would mean they could no longer recruit students requiring this certificate. This practice has only relatively recently been implemented and as such it is too early to determine its impact but some HEIs have expressed concern that this may adversely affect the relationship between staff and international students, with staff being seen as quasi police and international students feeling that they are being treated differently to UK and European students (BBC News 28/09/10). Recent developments as a result of this revised process in June 2014 saw the UK Home Office taking action against Glyndwr University, the University of West London and the University Bedfordshire as well as 57 private colleges, all of whom had their Tier 4 sponsor licence suspended.

As has already been noted the fees for student visas are substantial. The fee for a standard Tier 4 student visa has risen from £199 in 2010 to £310 in December 2014. The cost for extending has risen from between £357 and £628 in 2010 to between £422 and £822 in December 2014. The visa forms have been revised and anecdotal evidence from colleagues working in international admissions suggests that many students now pay a considerable additional fee to legal experts and specialist agencies to help them complete these forms. In March 2013 UKCISA announced that there had been 21 versions of the Tier 4 Guidance since the scheme was introduced in 2009. As reported in the UKCISA annual review 2012/2013, published in 2014, these changes have been so frequent and often so extensive that not only students and their advisors but also Home Office staff themselves have found it difficult to keep up to date.

This situation is further complicated by the significant increase in UK domestic tuition fees and substantial reductions in university funding from government and so it is imperative that UK universities become more creative, innovative and capitalise on their core strengths which may not include on-campus delivery (Shepherd 2012). This is on-going against a backdrop of increased domestic competition from private providers such as the BPP College of Professional Studies which secured the right in July 2010 to use the title BPP University College, the first private provider to secure

this status for 34 years (Baker 2010a). Most of these private providers have grown rapidly in recent years and this makes such organisations attractive propositions for private and institutional investors (HM Government 2013). The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (2013) reported that the number of students at private institutions more than doubled from 5,860 in 2010/2011 to 12,240 in 2011/2012 but this is contradicted by Paton, writing also in 2013, who noted that there were 160,000 students at 674 privately funded institutions in the academic year 2012/2013, far higher than previous estimates.

There is evidence of dissent within the coalition government concerning this targeting of international students. Travis (2010) reported that both the former education secretary, Michael Gove and the former universities secretary, David Willetts, privately warned that too rigid an immigration cap could affect the UK's competitiveness and reputation amongst international students. This concern was recently commented on by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology in April 2014:

"The overwhelming evidence that we received led us to conclude that changes to the immigration rules in this country have played a direct part in putting overseas students off from choosing the UK. The rules are seen as too complex and subject to endless changes, the visa costs are not competitive, and the rules relating to work after study are so limiting that prospective students are heading to the US, Australia, Canada and elsewhere" (Parliament 2014).

1.5   International students in UK HEIs

A useful chronology of the development of international students in the UK is offered by Bradley (2000). As early as the 13th century, institutions of higher education admitted largely rich and/or entrepreneurial European traveling scholars. Bradley and Harris (1993) note that the 16th century scholar Erasmus, after whom the student mobility scheme was named, was one of this group. From the last century onwards, visiting students tended to be non-European, reflecting the development of UK trade and cultural interests with countries in the British Empire and the Commonwealth. These were students from countries where higher education was less well developed and where the waiver of fee payments had become the established custom. Significant numbers of students were supported by the UK government scholarship and technical assistance programmes (UKCISA 2008). This perceived "subsidy" was brought to public attention by the Robbins Report (1963) which pointed to the fact that international students were receiving the equivalent of an annual subsidy of £9 million (Report of the Committee on Higher Education 1963 in McNamara and Harris 1997). This suggests the start of a perceived move from providing aid to developing Commonwealth countries, to viewing international students as a potential income stream.

An international student quota limit was set in 1977 to reduce public contributions to the subsidisation of these students (Bolsmann and Miller 2008). Full cost fees for

international students were finally introduced by the Conservative Government in 1979 (with certain exceptions such as students from the Commonwealth) and the quota was removed. The policy met with criticism on the grounds that a form of subsidy was not unreasonable given the level of past exploitation of developing countries by the western world (Hughes and Read 1991). However whilst numbers of international students decreased initially, they soon increased (Carlton 1994). This was part of a broader shift in policy and discourse towards neo-liberalism, where universities were seen as contributors to the national economy and were expected to compete globally for international students who would pay fees. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair adopted much of the neo-liberal orientation and emphasised globalisation as the context within which universities could contribute to the competitive knowledge economy (Couglan 2011b).

While enthusiasm for recruitment expansion continued, cautionary notes were sounded that international students may have additional pressures and problems to which institutions needed to be alert (Smith 1991; Howarth 1991). The introduction of European based Erasmus/Socrates sponsored exchanges from the mid-eighties onwards contributed further to the numbers of European students in UK HEIs. Whilst the exchange of cultures may be less extreme for these European students, there is evidence that they too experience additional pressures and adjustment challenges (Teichler and Maiworm 1988; Bradley 1997). UKCISA (2008) reported that in the 2000s international student numbers grew initially to over 200,000 with an estimated annual value approaching £4 billion. The British Council published "Vision 2020" predicting further growth in demand (Bohm et al 2004). The number of competitors, in what was being described as an industry, was also increasing with the Asian Tiger economies and then, more recently, European countries such as Italy, Denmark and Germany offering courses in the medium of English.

Three major strands or traditions present in the recruitment of international students have been identified by Bolsmann and Miller (2008). The first of these is labelled academic internationalism, where universities are considered to be places of learning, research and scholarship which attract students, scholars and teachers irrespective of their national origin (Yang 2002; Altbach 2004). Fenwick (1987:128) refers to an international exchange that: "… *implies reciprocity of benefit, an overall gain to the individuals concerned and the quality of future international understanding*". The expected outcomes of this approach are likely to be enhanced reputation and the development of research centres of excellence as well as identifying prospective staff.

The second is an economic discourse which uses the language of costs and benefits, otherwise labelled an economic competition discourse. There is increased competition between individual institutions and countries in economic terms to provide the education and training which provides income. This not only refers to the recruitment of international students to the home country but extends to the provision of distance education or the establishment of programmes and indeed increasingly entire institutions abroad. These developments are economically motivated to generate income, enhance brand awareness and in some cases provide a feeder

institution which will facilitate students continuing their education in the UK university. The economic competition discourse most accurately describes the approach at Midlands University. As will be discussed later in the next section, Midlands University is a post 1992 university where the emphasis is on teaching and income generation to ensure survival in an increasingly competitive market.

The third strand involves a: *"… civilising, training and developmental discourse originating in colonial empires"* and this is labelled development by Bolsmann and Miller (2008:15). Traditionally this referred to the provision of education and training for the colonies abroad and included the establishment of colleges and universities under the auspices of British universities. In the UK, the British Council is responsible for maintaining links with former colonies and territories (Room 2000). Room argued that a form of *"academic entrepreneurialism"* has emerged where: *"… the market for overseas students is politically constructed and maintained"* (2000:111). Bolsmann and Miller (2008) noted that the UK has a continuation of these former imperial and political connections that have evolved into financially beneficial markets and sources of income for universities, particularly in the US and the UK. This is a manifestation of the ideology of globalisation that extends from the political and cultural to the economic domain.

In January 2012, a report from the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education revealed that there were more than 200 overseas campuses around the world, of which 25 were British. The same report noted that for the first time there were more international students studying for British degrees overseas than in the UK. These students have been described as "glocal" students - in other words local students with global aspirations. However such campuses are not without both financial and reputational risks. Elledge (2012) noted that in 2007, Australia's University of New South Wales opened a Singapore campus which was meant to serve 15,000 students but actually recruited fewer than 150, it closed within weeks of opening and left a deficit in excess of £11m. Widely publicised events such as the former UKBA ban on recruiting overseas students at London Metropolitan University in September 2012 adversely affects the reputation of not just the institution in question but also UK education in general as a result of global media attention. In its defence, Coughlan (2012) noted that the exact rules of the UKBA changed substantially 14 times in the period of 2009-2012 and this made enforcing their regulations challenging.   This incident highlights the tension between efforts to clamp down on the perceived misuse of the student visa system and the pressure for institutions to recruit higher numbers of international students. Looking to the future it seems likely that the attractions for developing countries of sending students to high cost UK providers may dwindle as they continue to develop their own more robust quality systems and prestigious universities.

The policies of recent UK governments have influenced the continued increasing numbers of international students in the UK and these will be reviewed primarily through an economic lens. The value and volume of international students to UK

HEIs is well documented in both academic literature and by organisations such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and UKCISA. There have been enormous successes and the growth in student numbers has been quite dramatic. There has also been an ever growing realisation of the very particular needs of those students, far from home, and as a result there has been a massive increase in the professionalisation and range of services which are provided by UK HEIs.

Student mobility moves in many directions with an increasing number of international students coming to the UK, as evidenced by the following table:

Table 1.2: International student enrolments at UK HEIs by level of study (adapted from HESA 2014a)

International enrolments	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013
All levels	171,275 (+2%)	180,990 (+6%)	191,695 (+6%)	213,915 (+12%)	239,425 (+12%)	258,800 (+8%)	265 845 (+3%)	268,240 (+1%)
Undergraduate	83,165 (+1%)	84,620 (+2%)	88,005 (+4%)	95,995 (+9%)	106,950 (+11%)	117,865 (+10%)	126,295 (+7%)	133,025 (+5%)
Postgraduate	88,110 (+3%)	96,375 (+9%)	103,695 (+8%)	117,920 (+14%)	132,475 (+12%)	140,935 (+6%)	139,550 (-1%)	135,215 (-3%)

The above data indicate an overall increase of 57% between 2005/2006 and 2012/2013. While undergraduate enrolments have steadily increased the data for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 would indicate a moderate downturn in postgraduate recruitment. The year on year percentage increases indicate that the largest increases were between 2008 and 2010. HESA 2014 data indicate that in 2012/2013, 46% of all full time postgraduate students were international and 10% of all full time undergraduates. International student numbers differ significantly across institutions and awards with Russell Group institutions being particularly successful in international recruitment.

The precise number of international students studying in the UK is not known as no central statistics are kept of all those in both public and private sector institutions and as such the figures which are available relate only to public institutions. In the private sector, including those studying English language for more than six months, vocational training, pre-university preparation (including A' level study) and higher education, the figures are not centrally collated but it is thought that they could be between 150,000 and 200,000 (Paton 2013).

Table 1.3: Top non-EU sending countries (to UK universities) 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 (adapted from HESA 2014a)

Country	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
China	67,325	78,715	83,790
India	39,090	29,900	22,385
Nigeria	17,585	17,620	17,395
USA	15,555	16,335	16,235
Malaysia	13,900	14,545	15,015
Hong Kong	10,440	11,335	13,065
Saudi Arabia	10,270	9,860	9,440
Pakistan	10,185	8,820	7,185
Thailand	5,945	6,235	6,180
All other non EU countries	101,915	103,205	103,100
TOTAL	**292,205**	**296,565**	**299,970**

The 2012/2013 data indicate that the overall number of international students at UK universities fell by 1%, this was particularly noticeable in the postgraduate market and was the first such decline ever recorded (Morgan 2014). Morgan further noted that the number of Indian students had decreased by 25% and those coming from Pakistan had decreased by 19%, perhaps reflecting the impact of the revised visa policy as well as increased competition from other countries which may be perceived as more welcoming and safe. However this does not help to explain the 6% increase in the volume of Chinese students studying in the UK in 2012/2013. A survey published in July 2013 by Universities UK noted that this decrease from India was in addition to the 32% decline in the number of first-year Indian students in the previous year (Dandridge 2013). Declining demand has significant implications for course provision, especially as in 2012/2013 non-EU students represented 45% of all full time postgraduate students in the UK.

These dynamic changes are not confined to the UK university sector. Choudaha et al (2013) reported on the changing patterns of the top source countries of international students to the US and how they have changed over the past decade. China took over from Japan as the leading source of international students in 1990/2000, before being overtaken by India in 2001/2002, and then regaining the reins in 2009/2010. Japanese enrolments plunged from a peak of just over 47,000 in 1997/1998 to less than 20,000 in 2011/20012, while student enrolments from emerging markets such as Saudi Arabia increased by 700%, from 4,200 in 2002/2003 to 34,100 in 2011/2012.

In terms of subject areas chosen by international students, business and engineering are the most popular. As can be seen from the following table enrolments by subject

are relatively stable with increases in business and administrative studies (28,790), social studies (7,425) and creative arts (5,990).

Table 1.4: International students in HE 2008/2009 compared to 2011/2012 by subject of study (UKCISA 2014a)

	International students in 2008/2009 and % of all students who are international	International students in 20011/2012 and % of all students who are international
Business and administrative studies	101,715 (31%)	130,505 (36%)
Engineering and technology	46,055 (31%)	51,775 (32%)
Social studies	31,365 (15%)	38,790 (17%)
Computer science	22,190 (23%)	21,300 (22%)
Languages	21,265 (16%)	23,270 (17%)
Subjects allied to medicine	20,480 (7%)	23,035 (8%)
Creative arts and design	19,260 (12%)	25,250 (14%)
Law	18,005 (20%)	20,810 (22%)
Biological sciences	16,654 (10%)	19,570 (10%)
Education	12,835 (6%)	11,725 (6%)
Physical sciences	11,000 (13%)	13,025 (14%)
Medicine and dentistry	8,935 (14%)	10,605 (16%)
Architecture, building and planning	9,275 (14%)	11,415 (20%)
Historical and philosophical studies	8,685 (9%)	9,250 (9%)
Mass communication and documentation	7,485 (15%)	10,400 (19%)
Mathematical sciences	6,265 (17%)	8,160 (19%)
Combined	4,220 (3%)	2,890 (3%)
Agriculture and related subjects	2,170 (12%)	2,415 (11%)
Veterinary sciences	740 (14%)	1,025 (18%)
Total	**368,970 (15%)**	**435,235 (17%)**

These data include full and part time study modes.

The Migration Observatory (2013) found that trends differed by data source so that while the IPS (International Passenger Survey) estimates showed student migration increasing between the early 1990s and 2010 and then decreasing in 2011, reliable visa data was only available from 2007 and this showed an increase from 2007-2009

and a decrease in 2010-2011. Trends in passenger entry data are not clearly interpretable as student visitors were included until mid-2007 and in mid-2003 the Home Office improved its methods of identifying this data from landing cards, making pre-2004 data less comparable. It appears then that earlier data is likely to have over-estimated student entries. This means that there has probably been an increase in passenger entries since 2000 that is masked by these changes in data methods and presentation.

The latest information from the Office for National Statistics showed that net migration to the UK had fallen by more than one third in 2012 and there was a 46% drop in visas for international students wanting to study at UK colleges and language schools. This raises cause for concern as a significant proportion of these students are likely to continue onto degree level studies at universities. At the same time the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have indicated that there was a 5.5% increase from 2011/2012 to 2012/2013, for university applications from non-EU students (2013).

What is clear is that there is a wealth of data concerning international students, visas and immigration, what is more difficult to determine is the long term impact of the tighter migration controls being enforced and planned, combined with adverse publicity concerning studying in the UK. Study Group UK is a key provider of international students to UK universities and in an interview in May 2013, their managing director for higher education, James Pitman articulated their concerns:

"Today's international FE and English language students are tomorrow's university students and a drop of almost half in visa applications here is a real cause for concern. Even conservative estimates suggest 40% of international students arrive at universities through FE and independent pathways" (Richardson 2013).

Figures from UCAS for the academic year 2013/14 showed that non-EU applicants had increased by 7% and this represents 47,985 applicants as opposed to 44,841 in the previous academic year. However this seemingly good news does have to be tempered by the fact that the majority of international students apply directly to universities and so by-pass the UCAS system. UCAS data covers only undergraduate applications and the majority of international students in the UK study at postgraduate level, as evidenced by Table 1.2. Furthermore the UCAS data relates to applicants and not actual enrolments. It is acknowledged that international students may make a number of applications to different universities in different countries and so only a proportion will actually accept a place at a UK university and enrol.

While the dynamics within the international student market are subject to change in terms of where students come from and what they choose to study, it is apparent that the UK government, associated organisations such as the British Council, UKCISA and the UK university sector in general, are expending considerable efforts to attract and recruit international students to study in the UK. This chapter has demonstrated

that the international student market is dynamic and sensitive to issues such as increased competition, government policy and the media. The next two chapters will demonstrate that much is known about issues such as the policy context and cultural challenges which international students face. What is less well understood is the lived experiences of international students and how they experience the transition from their country of origin to the UK and this is the focus of this study.

1.6   Research site

The research site is a post 1992 university which was formerly a polytechnic. Midlands University is based in the centre of England, in an area of economic and social deprivation, as evidenced by significant EU funding. Midlands University prides itself on its successful widening access policy and this is reflected in its relationships with local colleges and the relatively high level of mature student enrolment. Demographic and economic changes have impacted on Midlands University's enrolments, which for the year 2013/14 stood at 16,000 full time equivalents. Of these 5% were from Europe and a further 10% were classed as international students.

Like most universities of this type, it has faced difficult decisions concerning the awards offered and the staff resource needed to effectively deliver these. Recent changes have included the closure of modern languages, chemistry and geology, with the future of a number of other departments being uncertain. At the same time success stories have included the development of a range of foundation degrees with local colleges, selected two year fast track degrees and popular awards in sports science, journalism, nursing and midwifery.

The Business School is based in one of the four academic faculties within Midlands University. The postgraduate business awards are an important income stream for the Business School and the cohort involved in this research was composed of 123 students, 93% of whom were international students.

The Business School has been active in international student recruitment and involved in international partnerships for more than two decades. For 2014/2015, international partnership income (where international students were taught overseas at partner institutions through franchise agreements) accounted for in excess of £2 million.

1.7   Structure overview

In chapter two, I critically review the literature that have helped to shape the focus of my inquiry, in theoretical as well as policy terms. This includes consideration of issues such as globalisation, internationalisation and evaluation of various studies which have sought to explain the international student experience.

The literature review leads onto chapter three which discusses a range of theoretical perspectives on capital. In particular I consider the ways in which Bourdieu's capital theory can be adapted to provide a framework for understanding the international student experience as described.

Chapter four discusses an outline and justification of the methodological approach, choice of research instrument and mode of analysis employed in this study. I give my reasons for adopting the particular approach taken, including discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the chosen technique for data production. I offer an explanation of how I approached ethical issues involved in my research with my participants and explain how I endeavoured to establish a degree of trust. I also consider some of the limitations and enabling factors associated with my own role in Midlands University.

The fifth chapter presents a summary of my interactions with the participants which seeks to start drawing out the themes identified through the interview process. Chapters six and seven are concerned with an analysis of the data using my theoretical framework to structure my findings.

The final chapter draws together the threads of the data collected and, reflects this back to the literature review. An analysis of the contribution made by the study leads, as is typical of much research, to raising more questions which require further research and as such the final conclusions offer suggested routes for future expansion of the subject area. I discuss the implications of my findings and how they contribute to current work in this field.

Chapter 2: Review of literature on being an international student

2.1   Introduction

The aims and the conceptual framework for this thesis were outlined in the first chapter. The primary aim is to investigate how international students understand their lived experiences in the UK. As a first step towards this aim, this chapter will review the literature focused on the international student experience.

The review is divided into three strands. The first will consider developments in globalisation and internationalisation, focusing on the aspects which have contributed to the current, dynamic situation in UK higher education as well as policy implications. Literature concerning the academic aspects of the international student experience comprises the second strand, where I have conceptualised the international student experience in terms of challenges. This includes discussion of a range of largely quantitative studies set in various locations which help to identify elements of the international student experience that were used to define the research questions. Finally, literature focusing on the social aspects of international student life will be explored, along with consideration of the impact of prejudice and discrimination.

There is much emphasis in the literature on the operational aspects of recruiting and retaining international students which reflects their growing importance as an income stream. Rakhsha's 2002 research found that international students may face unique challenges in the process of crossing global boundaries and this transition can result in both tangible and intangible losses. These tangible losses included access to their families, friends and homes as well as intangible losses such as a sense of belonging, often linked to cultural factors and language. These losses can combine to form a wide range of acculturative stressors. My research plans to contribute to the existing body of research by exploring a specific cohort of international postgraduate business students' experiences of studying at a UK university.

I have described the growth in international student mobility and the increasing importance of the internationalisation agenda in UK HEIs. The data presented demonstrated a moderate slowing down in the growth of international enrolments in the UK and a growth in international collaborations, in the face of increasing socio-economic challenges in the UK market. An appreciation of the impact of globalisation and internationalisation on UK higher education is an ideal starting point to developing an understanding of the policy context affecting the international student experience.

2.2   Globalisation and internationalisation in higher education

2.2.1   Globalisation in practice

Globalisation is often defined in terms of the increasing economic integration of the global community under the forces of advanced capitalism, and the increasing spread of communication technologies that provide instant information linkages around the world. David Held (1999:2) and his collaborators defined globalisation as: *"… the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness*". In an educational context, globalisation can be used to refer to the transnational transfer of ideas, curriculum, qualifications and skills. One of the most prolific writers on international student issues is the Australian academic Simon Marginson. In 2006 (a) Marginson wrote that higher education was one of the most international and globalised of all the social sectors and as such it was being transformed by both sides of the global symbiosis.

Much of the research on international students is derived from Australasia, largely as a result of the long term link between international students and policies designed to encourage permanent immigration. This interest is explained by Caluya et al (2011) who discussed the neoliberal approach to tertiary education, as adopted by the Australian government from the 1980s onward, which in reality meant a significant reduction in government funding that encouraged the higher education sector to focus on international student recruitment as a mechanism to raise revenue. As Marginson and Considine (2000) concluded, the result has been a paradigm shift in Australia, from a conception of universities as a public good, towards a conception of universities as a private consumer service.

An example of how policy can influence behaviour is provided by Ward, Masgoret and Gezentsvey (2009) who commented that the policy changes in 2008 in New Zealand were introduced to encourage the transition from study to work and permanent residence by creating more job opportunities for students and allowed greater access to work permits upon completion of educational qualifications. In 2009 approximately one in four international students in New Zealand was granted permanent residency. Australia has likewise adopted a two-step immigration process facilitating transition from temporary to permanent residence. This has enhanced the Australian labour market by drawing heavily on international students with high levels of English proficiency, recognised qualifications and Australian work experience. In 2009, over half of Australia's skilled migrants consisted of former international students (Hawthorne 2009). This reliance on international students is not without its risks, as has been seen by the adverse impact on international recruitment following several high profile, racially motivated incidents involving international students in Australia. These include the murders of an Indian student in 2011 (Bodkin 2013) and a Korean student in November 2013 (Atfield and Stephens 2013).

2.2.2 Globalisation and higher education

International student mobility is dynamic and susceptible to influences such as government policy and global media coverage (Beine et al 2014). While international student mobility is often considered to have largely positive outcomes for both individuals and knowledge economies, Adnett (2010) has presented a convincing, empirically supported argument, that this may not always be the case for developing countries. Adnett's research found that developing countries can lose graduates as a result of attractive immigration offers from developed countries, with potentially significant long-term economic and social implications.

One of the functions of higher education is to train graduates for global business and globally-affected industries, for example it is central to worldwide scientific knowledge and publication and is involved in global communications. The global market in higher education is a plural, two-tier market with rather different production dynamics in each tier. Cambridge and Oxford are among the most prestigious universities in the world according to the latest international rankings but other UK universities such as Sheffield and Leeds are falling down the rankings as the market becomes increasingly competitive (Kershaw 2013). The first tier is the "super league" of leading research universities, such as Harvard and Oxford; these dominate research and doctoral training. The super-league represents a status competition and not necessarily a commercial market; although many of these institutions have been very successful in obtaining funding and often have an economically successful and generous international alumni. These universities do not necessarily need to expand to take on all those students who can pay and as such they can remain selective and elite (Miller 2013).

Changing market conditions are encouraging globalisation in particular in those UK HEIs who fit into the second tier, where the market is more focused on commercial and vocational training. This is mostly focused on business and information technology based education and training and therefore includes Midlands University. In the context of the UK sector, these universities are actively seeking alternative income streams to compensate for the UK demographic and economic changes which are combining to form an increasingly challenging operating environment. While the vast majority of students are educated in their country of origin, global markets and the super league now overshadow once unchallengeable leading national universities.

The link between globalisation, higher education and subsequent employment has been noted by Whalley (1997), who observed that globalisation has transformed the occupational landscape for many graduates. International graduates are now more likely to need to function competently in social and work environments that are international and intercultural in nature due to the increasingly international nature of business. This skills development requirement includes developing graduates with the capacity to work in a society where cross-cultural capability is essential to employment (Heitmann 2005; Shiel 2008). This raises questions such as what or

whose knowledge should inform a global society. Louisy (2004:287) asks: "… *is it only knowledge conceived in Euro-American terms that wins the gold standard of global approval?*" Graduates need increasingly well-developed, life-long learning skills and attitudes, involving at least an international awareness. Many graduates will require a level of international competency with some requiring second language proficiency and they will need to be knowledgeable about and open to views that are likely to differ from their own. Graduates are now required to demonstrate skills that enable them to interpret local problems within a broad, international context and to assess global developments for their impact on their own lives and work. Recognition of the global skills race and employer demands for graduates with a broader world-view all serve to reinforce globalisation as a critical priority (Beckett and Brookes 2012).

Global markets and global public goods can only be understood in the context of a geo-strategic analysis of world higher education as a system of flows, relations and hierarchies (Marginson 2006b). Marginson goes on to suggest then that global higher education is subject to Anglo-American hegemony and this often renders globalisation as a process of "Americanisation". This is an imperial hegemony in which the US is supreme in the military, technological, economic and political spheres, while the UK plays a secondary role alongside the US, in the spheres of language, culture, education and governmental ideologies.

The benefits of globalisation in higher education are distributed asymmetrically, disadvantaging not just the developing nations, where capacity is likely to be limited, but also the non-native English speaking nations. Global convergence in itself does not have to be Anglo-American or imperialist, it could be associated with many different possible configurations of power and cultural content, nevertheless, in this era, Epstein (2012) argues that it is Anglo-American. This aligns with one of the current discourses which is concerned with the concepts of imperialism and Euro-centralism, especially when considering the relative advantage of European over non-European students in UK HEIs.   Hence in the context of higher education, globalisation is in fact American and European-centric, with an emphasis on the dominance of the English language.

The situation with regards to academic publications in Indonesia illustrates the domination of English speaking nations, thus extending Marginson's "Americanisation" theory (2006b). Indonesia has a population of 220 million, more than two thirds the size of the US and is home to over 300 diverse language groups. In the period 1993 – 1997, Indonesian scholars produced 310 papers published in mainstream science and social science journals in English. US scholars published just under a quarter of a million papers, almost 1,000 times as many (Salager-Meyer 2008).

The reproduction of knowledge in the US is facilitated by international doctoral education which attracts talent from all over the world and around 45% of the foreign graduates stay on in the US post-graduation to work, with the support of a migration

policy designed to attract high quality foreign labour (Ruiz 2014). The proportion of students from India, China and the UK who stay in the US is particularly high and thus this brain drain affects developed as well as developing nations, although it could be argued that for those international students who return to their country of origin, the affect could more accurately be described as brain circulation where those developing economies ultimately benefit from the education undertaken overseas. Those international students who remain in the USA help to reproduce its knowledge economy and American university power rests on the larger American power in technologies, economy and culture. The importance of international students in the US is illustrated by recent research which found that international students accounted for up to 70% of the enrolments on full time postgraduate electrical engineering awards, while for computer science the figure was 63% and 60% for industrial engineering (Redden 2013).

International graduate students can have a significant and positive impact on the rate of innovation in the US, as measured for example by the number of patents registered by them (Chellaraj et al 2008). Chellaraj et al's research found that the rate and scale of innovation significantly contributed to technological advances which have been a major factor in US productivity growth. Furthermore, the research concluded that the immigration of international students also had a significant impact on government budgets in developed economies as the highly educated pay higher taxes and are much less likely than less educated nationals to receive benefits. A further example of the impact of international graduates is provided by Zerehi (2008) who found that in the US, international medical graduates were an essential source of primary care doctors, making up around 25% of community health centre doctors.

2.2.3 Globalisation and student mobility

One of the ironies of globalisation is that the mutual educational advantages of cross cultural contact are undermined by a reductive, narrowly economic view of international students as a source of revenue (Habu 2000). Given the current domestic recruitment challenges facing UK higher education providers, as a result of the combination of changes in government funding and demographics, as well as the significant increase in tuition fees and increased competition in the UK and international markets, this comment is all the more relevant in 2015. It is recognised that the full benefits international students bring to the UK economy and society in general are difficult to quantify (Vickers and Bekhradnia 2007). In the previous chapter various estimates in respect of the financial contribution of international students in higher education were considered, the most of recent of these is the estimate of around £18 billion for the academic year 2011/12, as noted in the Universities UK report from April 2014.

While much literature has focused on the positive aspects of international student mobility, there is one significant, potentially negative aspect for developing countries, as identified by Adnett in his 2010 research. Adnett found that that the trade in higher education is unbalanced, with low income countries being significant net importers of

higher education and therefore the benefits accrue predominantly to developed countries, with the costs being disproportionately borne by the poorest countries. He further argued that if the increasing tendency for less developed economies to import higher education threatened the growth of their own HE systems, then these countries' growth potential may be reduced. The prospect of such an outcome gives rise to the possibility that there may be an argument for the temporary protection of the HE sectors of developing countries against competition.

The term brain drain is defined as a permanent loss of skilled or professional graduates who have immigrated to a more industrialised host country where they have received their education (Pedersen 1990). Again referring to Adnett's 2010 study which used data from the OECD (2006), he suggests that countries with smaller populations can be disproportionately affected by the brain drain affect. These data suggest that some of the smaller African and Caribbean countries suffer the greatest brain drain with, for example 80% of Jamaican graduates (population 2.6 million) and Guyanese graduates (population three quarters of a million) now living in an OECD country and over 70% of graduates from Guinea- Bissau (population 1.6 million) doing likewise.

Brain drain has been an issue of great concern for various countries but recent research would indicate that return rates are increasing as some developing economies become more attractive. For example, in China, data from 2003 noted by Hayhoe and Zha (2004), indicated that 460,000 students had gone overseas to study, with only 150,000 returning. However they go on to suggest that there is evidence to imply that this is changing with the number of returnees from the mid-2000s increasing by an annual rate of 13%. As a result of this, the faculty in China's highest ranked universities are now as internationalised and experienced as those in major western universities, if not more so. The same study reports that in 2004, 70% of professors and 80% of associate professors at high ranking Peking University were returnees from the West, as were 85% of the 2004 heads of research institutes and 81% of the Chinese Academy of Sciences academicians.

The impact of Australian policy regarding international student migration provides an example of how international student mobility can be encouraged but at the same time there are warning signs of the potential implications of over-reliance on international students. The combination of government policy and aggressive marketing strategies by Australian universities has had a significant, positive impact on international student enrolments. International students have been further encouraged as the Australian government has simultaneously given increased weighting in its immigration policy to those applicants with qualifications from Australian universities. In 2009 students from overseas represented 22% of the total Australian tertiary student population (OECD 2011). In 2010 Glaser noted that there were approximately 170,000 overseas students, mostly from China, India and Korea, enrolled at Australian universities. This compares with the latest data from Australian Universities.com (2014) which reports international student enrolments of 233,099,

meaning that international students represent 22.3% of the entire Australian university student population.

The implications of these data are that international students make a direct and very substantial financial contribution to the running costs, especially the salaries, of Australian universities and Glaser goes on to query the alleged preferential treatment of international students, citing that very few fail and indeed most pass with honours. Notwithstanding the undoubted significant achievements of many international students, the latter comment could imply that some Australian institutions are in danger of becoming over-reliant on their international students and thus are keen to ensure they have a positive experience which encourages them to act as institutional ambassadors.

The UK higher education context also provides evidence of the impact of changes in policy and practice. Research shows that the number of students studying for UK awarded degrees in overseas countries increased by 13% in 2011/2012, with 571,000 students studying abroad, one third more than the previous year (Ratcliffe 2013). The latest data from UKCISA in March 2014 indicated that there was a further significant increase in 2012/2013 with 707,350 students studying wholly overseas for a UK award (UKCISA 2014). There now more international students enrolled on UK awarded degrees overseas than there are international and European students coming to the UK to study. This has been the result of developments such as the increasing availability of online courses and collaborations with international institutions through franchise arrangements, thus possibly cannibalising on recruitment efforts to encourage international students to study in the UK.

Despite much effort and investment by UK HEIs, only 7% of these international students are enrolled at UK university international branch campuses, as opposed to at an international partner organisation or enrolment on distance learning programmes (Ratcliffe 2013). Branch campuses are defined as higher education institutions run by a university based in a different country. For example, the Paris Sorbonne University runs a campus in Abu Dhabi, the US's Cornell University has one in Qatar, and the UK's University of Nottingham has campuses in China and Malaysia. There are around 200 branch campuses across the world with more being added every year but Asia and the Gulf region have been identified as particular branch campus hot spots due to their transport links and relatively dense populations (Aparajit 2013).

Ratcliffe (2013) further speculated that the continually revised UK visa regulations, combined with negative rhetoric from some elements of government have contributed to the decrease in students coming to the UK, in particular from India and Pakistan. The numbers of students coming to the UK from India fell by 38% between 2011 and 2012 and those from Pakistan fell by 62% (Ward 2014). High profile situations such as London Metropolitan University, where their Tier 4 licence was temporarily suspended pending investigation into their management of international student records, have contributed to increased global media interest in UK education

(Beckford 2012). The immediate impact of this suspension was that London Metropolitan's enrolled international students faced the possibility of deportation if an alternative place of study could not be identified within a limited timeframe. This resulted in negative publicity around the world, not just for the institution but affecting the reputation of UK higher education in general (Sugden 2012).

The influence of policy on UK-inward international student mobility was noted by Robinson (2013) who reported on the tension within government and between government and the university sector in respect of the government's refusal to remove international students from its targets for decreasing net migration, despite pressure from MPs and vice-chancellors. This approach is contrary to government policy in both Australia and the US, where international students are not included in net migration data. A February 2013 report from the Commons Business, Innovation and Skills committee on international education strategy, called on the government to urgently re-think its position stating: *"The inclusion of overseas students at accredited institutions in the overall total is misleading. Furthermore it runs the risk of undermining a world class export market*". This debate has been added to by university teaching unions who have accused the government of pandering to those who wish to see stricter immigration regulations, rather than support the international recruitment efforts of universities.

This section has highlighted the dynamic nature of increased international student mobility and how it has been significantly affected by globalisation and government policy. It is essential to understand this context in order to appreciate the environment in which international students leave their countries of origin in order to pursue their educational goals overseas and how the UK higher education sector is affected by globalisation.

2.3   Internationalisation of UK HEIs

Combined with globalisation, the increasing internationalisation of UK HEIs over the past decade has facilitated international student mobility and significantly changed the UK HE student population. Internationalisation is relevant to this study because it considers the organisational context to explain the importance of international students to UK HEIs.

Internationalisation is not new, as since the eighteenth century, the expansion of international trade has been led by economists and governments as the key mechanism for encouraging economic development (Adnett 2010). As the UK moved from a manufacturing to a service based economy, the development of services such as reputable higher education has been regarded as a critical aspect of economic growth. This was emphasised in the Browne Review: *"Higher education helps to produce economic growth, which in turn contributes to national prosperity",* (2010:14).

Internationalisation in the higher education context, is usually conceived in terms of universities' active agency to foster research, teaching and curricular change that is

internationally oriented and to embrace a growing number of international students. It is often carried out within a framework of national governmental support and in association with national cultural and educational agencies, such as The British Council. The role of the nation state and international political relations, thus remains important in the internationalisation of universities, in spite of the ways in which the agency of nation states is being limited by the forces of globalisation.

Most UK institutions of higher education are actively pursuing policies of internationalisation, seeking to reach out to global markets, to internationalise their curricula and to increasingly recruit international students (Middlehurst 2002). HEIs are often complex institutions and so trying to share information and create synergies across the boundaries of subjects and of teaching, research and commercialisation can be challenging but these processes can be facilitated by international grant awarding bodies who are keen to support international exchanges (Ritchie 2006). Based on my experience of working in three UK HEIs, I would agree with Ritchie's assertion that most UK universities are already highly international with a proportion of both students and staff originating from outside the UK and with dynamic international partnerships, sometimes functioning in isolation from other institutional strategies.

The internationalisation of commercial businesses typically follows a four stage process: exporting, licensing production; joint ventures and sole ventures (Healey 2008). A broadly similar course of differential development can be identified in UK HEIs, with institutions engaging at different levels subject to factors such as access to funding and approach to risk management. Many Australian, British and increasingly Canadian and New Zealand universities are engaged in typically franchising or licensing agreements with both state and private institutions. In countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and more recently China and the Middle East, there have been substantial developments in branch campuses, though national regulations concerning the licensing of education providers usually requires the involvement of a local partner and organisations are subject to potentially swift and sometimes unanticipated changes in government and so also policy (Aparajit 2013). The strategy of developing branch campuses is generally regarded as potentially high risk due to the often significant financial commitment needed to secure appropriate premises and the negotiation of local legislation and regulation required to ensure compliance. In November 2013 it emerged that the University of Central Lancashire would lose an estimated £3.2 million in the collapse of its planned campus in Thailand. The reason behind this failure was that the Thai joint venture organisation had failed to complete the purchase of all the land needed due to regulatory changes (Morgan 2014). Such costly and high profile situations are infrequent but serve to warn of the potential pitfalls of developing campuses overseas.

The increasing interest in internationalisation in HEIs across many countries has been the result of the recognition that the core market of 18 year old school and college leavers is a decreasing demographic and so alternative prospective student markets and potential income streams need to be identified and targeted. In the UK context,

within the discourse of economic globalisation, internationalisation is regarded as a means to supplement decreasing public expenditure on higher education and as such internationalisation is considered to be an increasingly essential element of UK universities' growth and indeed survival strategy (Devos 2003).

Internationalisation strategies not only affect international students but also those students resident in the UK, who have increased options available to them when considering the location of their studies. British students, who have often been deterred by limited language abilities, have been attracted by lower fees (or in the case of Scandinavia, Austria and much of Germany no tuition fees) and English delivery and assessment. For example Dutch universities in 20015 offered more than 1,500 courses delivered entirely in English (thecompleteuniversityguide.com). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2012), around 22,000 UK students went overseas to study in 2011. In 2012 this number had marginally increased to 28,180, representing just over 1% of the overall UK student population (Sellgren 2014).

Looking to the future, the overall growth in international student mobility is increasing with the rising middle classes in the fast developing populations and economies in the CIVETS countries (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa). This is in addition to the relatively newly defined MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), where middle class families are increasingly able to consider international options for their children's higher education (Elliott 2014). At the same time some countries are investing heavily in higher education with for example India expecting an 18% growth in higher education funding to support the 40 million higher education students expected by 2020 (www.oifc.in). As quality assurance processes are developed and research investment results in higher ranking in these developing countries, it is clear that the global higher education market will become increasingly competitive.

The combination of globalisation and internationalisation mean that those in UK higher education are likely to be working with an increasingly diverse range of international students. These students will inevitably have varied educational and cultural experiences as well as language competency. This makes it critical that HEIs develop an understanding of the complexities and variables which contribute to the international experience in order to meet these students' diverse needs effectively to ensure satisfaction and enhance global reputation.

2.4   International students' experiences and challenges

The international student experience literature tends to focus on the range of challenges which these students may face whilst they endeavour to live and study in a foreign environment. These challenges can include homesickness and loneliness as a result of the loss of support frameworks, sometimes exacerbated by a lack of meaningful relationships with host nationals (Holmes 2005, Brown 2009). Other challenges which have been identified include culture shock, perceived

discrimination, language difficulties, unfamiliar pedagogic approaches, unrealistic self and family expectations, financial concerns and an altered sense of identity (Church 1982; Sandhu and Asrabadi 1994; Lee 2004).

The literature suggests that international students are more likely to experience more psychological and social distress than host students (Ward 2001). Researchers such as Khawaja and Stallman (2011) found that university students can experience a range of stressors such as academic demands from their new educational and social environments, as well as issues stemming from normal age-related development, such as psychological autonomy, identity formation and economic independence. Culture shock, social isolation, conditions in the home countries, cross-cultural relationships and financial difficulties were all identified as potential stressors by Ahmad in 2006. Additional factors identified by Lin and Yi in 1997 and Sarkodie-Mensah in 1998 included concern regarding compliance with immigration regulations and accompanying anxiety, employment issues, stress and depression.

The challenges of adjusting to living and studying in a foreign environment, usually in a second language, were discussed in Channell's 1990 study of Asian international students studying at a UK university. She found that in the British university system some of these students felt lost, insecure and directionless as their previous educational experience was in a system that was much more controlled and directed. A later study by McClure in 2007 found that adjustment for international students was the most difficult in the first six months from entry into the new cultural context, largely due to the influence of previous educational and cultural experiences on expectations. These stressors can contribute to adjustment difficulties amongst international students, particularly those such as my MBA participants as they are likely to be resident in the UK for around twelve months.

In particular, international non-native English speaking students have been found to face increased difficulties in their adjustment to higher education in English speaking, western universities (Blue 2000; Li and Gasser 2005; Andrade 2006). In general, the main challenge for these students is to become acculturated into a new academic and cultural community. In addition to language barriers which can impede effective communication, many of these students have personal challenges such as financial hardship and variable family support; psycho-social challenges, such as making new friends, isolation, loss of social status and pressure related to having to understand the rules that apply in specific social situations as well as academic challenges such as managing their workload.

2.5   Academic cultures

Much of the research undertaken into international students views their experiences through a western education lens in terms of culture, learning behaviour and teaching expectations. The majority of these studies have been undertaken in western institutions, often with western researchers, focusing on the experiences of international students who are not native English speakers. The assumption is often

made that international students, particularly from those collectivist cultures, such as China and Korea, are culturally constrained and so it is the individual student's responsibility to adjust to their new environment at the earliest opportunity in order to succeed. It is acknowledged that the term collectivist can be subject to different context-dependent definitions. The definition which I consider to be the most appropriate, in the context of my research, is where the term collectivist is used to refer to those cultures where self-assertion is negatively valued and individuals are expected to align themselves with society. In turn, it is expected that others in society will work to fulfil one's own needs (Markus and Kitajama 1991).

The interface of international students' cultural expectations and the culture of their foreign academic environment has been researched by Read et al in 2003. This study found that academic culture is neither uniformly accessed nor experienced by international students. The engaged student with involvement in extracurricular activities, student union events and who is on first name terms with lecturers has a completely different experience to the student who remains on a peripheral level. This research implies that personality is an important influence, thus challenging the assertion that county of origin is the key factor affecting experience.

Many international students come from educational cultures that are more didactic, structured and hierarchical than the more individualistic western academic system. These students may find it challenging to adapt to a context that places a greater stress on self-directed learning, independent problem solving and critical analysis (Furnham 1997; Bruce and Brameld 1999; Smith and Smith 1999). Evans' 2006 findings concerning international nursing students provides a useful illustration of how these differences may challenge students' understanding of academic expectations. This study identified that extreme diligence and hard work were key characteristics which had served these students well in their former didactic educational culture which was heavily dependent on examinations. Evans found that while hard work was undoubtedly always a virtue in academia, it may not be sufficient to assist students to adjust to a western academic culture where greater emphasis is placed on the demonstration of independent learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Another illustration of differing expectations can be found when considering behaviour and responsiveness in the classroom. In the learning repertoire of Asian students, especially students from Confucian heritage countries such as China and Korea, the participation discourse is interpreted as listening attentively to lectures and taking as many notes as possible. This was defined as "mental participation" by Cortazzi and Jin (1996). A comprehensive discussion of the shared characteristics of collectivist societies such as China, Vietnam, Singapore, Korea and Japan, often referred to by the term Confucian heritage cultures, is offered by Phuong-Mai et al (2005). These shared characteristics include a tendency towards the need to maintain harmony and consensus, respect for others and moderation in all. It is this understanding of the term Confucian that I have adopted.

In my experience, Asian students can be concerned about losing face by exposing their weaknesses (either in terms of their language competency or the content of any classroom contribution) to academics and peers who may then regard them as less intellectually able. Such apparent lack of responsiveness and verbal participation could be interpreted as limited understanding and engagement, rather than an attempt to focus on content.

These illustrations demonstrate some of the challenges for both international students and those responsible for teaching and assessing them. Lee, Koeske and Sales (2004) found that a clash of cultural values was inevitable and gave the example that in Chinese classroom culture, very often lecturers were held responsible for the learning outcomes of their students. A student's performance was believed to directly correlate with a lecturer's competencies and indeed Asian students were often labelled "learners" (Ballard and Clanchy 1991). This perspective implies that for these international students, still inhabiting their own cultural world while trying to understand the requirements of their new academic environment, they may believe that any disappointment or failure is a direct result of their lecturers' ineffective teaching, rather than as a result of their own behaviour.

International students arriving with their own particular cultural experiences, gained and ingrained over time, have to engage with their new foreign higher level institution, which has its own practices and expectations around teaching and learning. Where these have similarities to the international student's previous institution and culture, the student is more likely to achieve personal goals. Increased levels of student diversity implies a lack of such a comfortable fit for some international students, leading to a gap in the relationship between parts of the student body and the academics' expectations in the context of their higher level institution.

Educational research underpinned by Bourdieu's work, which will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter, has argued that educational institutions are not neutral establishments (Reay et al 2001; Laureau and Weininger 2003; Yosso 2005). Reay et al (2001:2) wrote that institutions are also slow to change as: *"… by dint of their collective nature* (they) *are less fluid than individual habitus".* Vaara and Fay in 2011 defined habitus is an internalised system of schemes for perceiving, thinking, feeling and acting within a given field and its structures. That is not to say that individuals cannot change as through interaction with the norms, practices and rewards of an institution, these are expressed as institutional habitus. However, the concept of habitus implies that individual change is not easy, especially in the context of international MBA students who may only be resident for around12 months and so are pressurised to adapt within a relatively limited time. The same concept applies to staff involved with international students who may have fixed ideas concerning students from particular cultures and locations.

A default position for lecturers who do not wish to challenge their existing assumptions concerning international student characteristics and the link to what makes a good student has been termed the deficit model (Carroll and Ryan 2005). The deficit model fails to acknowledge the individual strengths, motivations and achievements of international students and instead focuses on stereotypes based on country of origin and is often linked to perceived language competency, which Hall and Wai-Ching Sung (2009:54) identified as being different to cultural differences. Their study reported that academics considered that Asian students' classroom behaviour often focused on the perceived problems that international students can bring with them, such as:

"… poor spoken and written language ability; a low level of participation in group work; a reluctance to display critical thinking in study; problems with reference skills and plagiarism; and difficult relationships with UK students in teaching groups".

The financial implications to universities of recruiting and retaining international students can be substantial. As already highlighted, the tuition fees and additional revenue gained from these students is also increasingly significant. Organisational costs can include English language development opportunities and specialist pastoral support, such as guidance concerning visa regulations. Managing the terms of conditional and rapidly decreasing government finances, however incongruent with internal value, has become a major challenge for the HE sector in the UK. Recent research suggests that the annual government funding to English universities will make up just 15% of universities' income by 2016, the lowest for over a century (Paton 2012).

As a result of funding cuts and a reluctance to invest in enhanced resources in a climate of uncertainty, many academic institutions operate under an increasingly stretched staff/student ratio. Added to this is the increasing proportion of full time academic staff over 51. In February 2014 HESA published their latest report on staff in UK HE covering the period 2012/2013 which found that 9.6% of all female academic staff were over the age of 51 and 18% of male staff fell into the same age category. Staff support is essential for international students, often requiring proportionally more attention in order to help them succeed in their studies and yet often they are the least likely to ask for help (Silver and Silver 1997). This is echoed by Elsey (1990:57) who found that British academics felt pressured by international students' need for: *"… a great deal of time and attention".*

2.6   Previous educational experiences

International students have a diverse range of previous educational experiences and as such it is unlikely that those teaching them in the UK will have a detailed understanding of the implications of all of these. To try to embrace these diverse experiences, while delivering a specific curriculum within a limited timeframe requires considerable empathy and experience. Some literature, accuses western students and teachers of tending to ignore the existing knowledge of international students

from Asia. For example, Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto (2005:300) found that some students from China, while disappointed, considered: *"… (the) lack of interest in Chinese knowledge from their Canadian peers and professors is "understandable" …* (they) *"give up" knowing more about "another world" because it is not important or second class".* This experience suggests a lack of respect and interest which could be interpreted by international students as a rejection of the validity and value of their previous educational experiences.

Issues concerning how international students apply techniques of learning are often linked to the cultural context, where differences in academic values and expectations are magnified. There are issues of cultural passivity and lack of creativity (Biggs 1999) and perceived cases are also extended to students from African, Middle Eastern or East Asian countries (Ballard and Clanchy 1997). Many international students face dilemmas over how they are expected to learn in a western learning environment (Ward 2001). In Biggs and Watkins' 1996 study, they argued that when students from a Confucian heritage culture are viewed through the lens of familiar western polarities, the focus becomes blurred and even distorted. Such polarities including memorising versus understanding and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, have been derived in the West. Biggs and Watkins' research suggests that issues of cultural tension in learning should never be considered a one-way transfer of knowledge.

It can be argued that learned ignorance has a structural consequence which enables the education system to reproduce practices that may have well served previous students. The alternative is to implement changes to acknowledge the experiences of a more diverse range of students. Singh (2010) supported this argument by suggesting that current western educational practices, curricula and resources typically do not always engage the intellectual resources of culturally and linguistically diverse students. This might be explained by the concept of "epistemic ignorance" which Kuokkanen (2008:60) defined as: *"… educational practices and discourses that enable the continued exclusion of other than dominant western epistemic and intellectual traditions".* This concept is reinforced by the earlier noted dominance of English language academic publications which are primarily European and American based. Kuokkanen's research does imply a process of disenfranchisement where not only do international students have to adapt to new processes of teaching and learning but their existing knowledge base is potentially discredited. This inevitably impacts on their scholastic capital which will be further explored in the next chapter.

2.7   Teaching and learning

Academic staff and students bring different sets of expectations derived from their cultural values, beliefs, perceptions, experiences and attitudes into the classroom (Hofstede 1986; Scollon and Scollon 1995). It has earlier been noted that culture plays a crucial role in shaping the perceptual processes of both academic staff and students so that they develop culturally influenced interpretative frameworks. Li, Baker and Marshall (2002) found that these cultural influences can in turn affect

interpretations of a range of academic factors, inter alia academic staff-student relationships, classroom interactions and student performance.

Academic staff and students from different cultural backgrounds may differ significantly when interpreting their respective roles in classroom interactions and in their conceptualisation of what constitutes learning and teaching (Widdowson 1993). Fundamental differences in the culture of learning and teaching coupled with a lack of appreciation of these differences amongst students and academics, can contribute to conflicting and sometimes unrealistic expectations (Li 2002). These have tended to result in an emphasis on differences rather than more subtle similarities. For example, Wang and Byram's 2011 study of Chinese postgraduate students found that their sample's academic adjustment to a British university involved bringing certain concepts of learning with them, acquiring new ones and identifying ways to combine the two. This study also found that Chinese students were aware of the contextual nature of their learning process and the relationship between the former and new contexts was not one of substitution but rather of extension and interaction.

Various studies of international students have sought to identify their diverse expectations. These have included in Billing 1998 and Ramsden, also in1998, they both found that international students valued those mechanisms that clarified the expectations of lecturers, for example clear course objectives, effective staff-student communication and a preference for enthusiastic lecturers who had good presentation skills and provided detailed, regular and prompt feedback. In Li et al's 2002 study of international students, it was found that those lecturers who emphasised learner autonomy, independent thinking and immediate application of theories were seen as abdicating their responsibilities. This quotation from an international student from Li et al's study, illustrates a variation in cultural values as well as a perception of value for money:

"I came to study the course because I do not know it. If I had known the course, why should I have to bother to learn it once more? Yet they want us to be self-reliant? What is your responsibility? We have not got what we paid for", (Li 2002:147).

There is an expectation in the UK HE sector that students will participate in independent learning whereby they will be encouraged to engage in discussion and argument to learn to develop critical thinking skills. This process will be facilitated by academic staff but the emphasis will be on the individual student's responsibility to learn. Authors including Rosenberg et al in 2008 have contrasted this perspective with that practised in collectivist cultures, where students are expected to be quiet and deferential in class. This behaviour is considered necessary to facilitate learning and the academic staff are regarded as the primary authority whose responsibility is to provide comprehensive instruction and guidance.

Several studies have been located in Australian universities with a focus on students from India. Dalglish and Chan's 2005 study of international students at an Australian university found that some Indian students were surprised by the differences in

teaching style and whilst they appreciated the benefits of a more self-directed learning regime, they found it difficult to adjust. Dalglish and Chan's study also found that some students considered the class sizes too large and this was interpreted negatively as a lack of individual attention. A subsequent study by Ahmad in 2006 with Indian students at a different Australian university, found that postgraduate students had commenced their studies with well-defined expectations of their chosen university and this included a high standard of teaching, where teaching staff were expected to make classes interesting and intellectually stimulating. Similar international student expectations were identified by East in his 2001 study based in Australia. These expectations included quality teaching, wanting the university to respond to their education needs, improvement in English language skills and mixing with local students. In addition Hellsten in 2002 found that the expectation of being cared for by the host community and institution was prevalent amongst international students.

There is evidence to support the assertion that there are differences in cultural norms concerning the availability of academic staff outside the classroom. This is illustrated in Fisher et al's 2002 study of over 200 undergraduate business students. This study found that there were significant differences between the expectations of academic staff availability to meet with students between Australian and international students, with the latter expecting more availability. The authors suggest that this could link to parental expectation, suggesting that international students have higher self-expectations of performance, as a result of their parent's expectations and this could manifest itself in being more demanding of academic support. This is consistent with Phillips (1990) who found that Asian students in particular, were more inclined to seek clarification from lecturers outside the classroom.

The process of engaging with academic staff outside the classroom was also explored by Li et al in their 2002 study. One of the findings of this study was that international students studying in New Zealand did not like the idea of making an appointment to see a member of staff. It seemed to them that making an appointment with academic staff made the relationship too formal and too business-oriented. In my experience, this practice of making appointments is likely to contrast with the experiences of many Chinese students, where most teaching staff in Chinese state universities are available 24/7 because they are contractually compelled to live on campus and thus make themselves constantly accessible.

The literature in cross-cultural psychology and in intercultural and multicultural education documents differences in academic staff and student expectations and behaviours across cultures (Colvin et al 2015). Factors that have been found to vary cross-culturally include the relative importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; preference for co-operative, competitive and individual learning; basic approaches to studying; teaching and learning styles; as well as different views on the definition and significance of plagiarism and what constitutes academic dishonesty (Chen 1994; Barrett-Lennard 1997; Salil and Hong 2001; Hammond and Guo 2002; Hayes and Introna 2005).

More recently research by Abhayawansa and Fonseca in 2010, identified that cultural background significantly influenced learning styles while Dahlin and Regmi's 1997 research focused on the extent to which international students' conceptions of learning was influenced by their cultural experiences. As international students are culturally predisposed to learn in a particular way, they are likely to experience culture shock when required to adapt to different academic behaviour and expectations which may be incompatible with their previous experiences. This is reinforced by the findings of Townsend and Poh (2008) who explored international students' academic experiences and reached the conclusion that adjustment to teaching style was a major challenge. Studies such as that by Aubrey in 1991, found that students from countries where value is placed on rote learning may find it particularly difficult to adjust to the importance placed on critical thinking in western institutions. In a 1994 study, Liberman undertook over 600 qualitative informal interviews with Asian students studying in the USA and he found that although students reported difficulties in adjusting to the interactive teaching style and critical thinking approach to learning, they did consider that it was beneficial to their learning.

The relationship between collectivism and power distance was explored in Ward's 2006 study of international students. In this context the concept of power distance used in cultural studies to conceptualise social hierarchy, will be used in order to discuss how the behaviour of international students in their relationships with others, can differ. A detailed discussion of the concept of power distance can be found in section 3.2. Ward described how those students who were from high power distance cultures were more strongly motivated to show respect to lecturers by maintaining a formal distance. This meant they were less likely to raise questions and debate, particularly in the classroom, as such behaviour may have been perceived as challenging a lecturer, which could in turn lead to potential loss of face. This contrasted with the behaviour of students from low power distance cultures who were found to be more willing to engage in discussion in the classroom. These differences in cultural values can lead to misperceptions across cultural groups with quiet but attentive students from collectivist cultures being perceived as uninterested or disengaged and more individualistic students being viewed as ill-mannered for their interjections. Aspects of the collectivist-individualist and the high and low power distances distinctions are reflected in the dialectic-dialogic approaches in education. In the former approach the teacher holds knowledge and so has power and control, while in the latter, the teacher shares power and control by engaging with students.

Broader cross-cultural differences in value systems can lead to different assumptions concerning student and lecturer roles (Becker 1990). For example, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) argued that Chinese students are more likely to view the lecturer as an authority figure who is to be obeyed, rather than the more widely held British view of a lecturer as a friendly facilitator. Chinese students are also more likely to see their own roles as results-focused so they learn by listening and reflection. By contrast, lecturers at UK HEIs tend to encourage their students to develop independence and engage in critical thinking.

Cross-cultural differences clearly exist and are recognised as at least somewhat problematic by some international students. For example, 80% of Asian students in Chang and Chin's 1999 study cited different learning styles as a significant study challenge and many remarked on difficulties in group discussions with home students. Critics have argued that educators frequently adopt negative and stereotypic views of international students (Ballard and Clanchy 1984; Samuleowicz 1987). This is illustrated by Adams (1992) who found that students who are not from the dominant cultural group can often be viewed as being under prepared, unmotivated or unintelligent as a result of their in-class behaviour. There is some evidence that home students believe international students expect more help from their teachers than they actually do (Tatar and Horenczyk 1996). Asmar (2005) has also noted that international students are viewed as requiring more attention, if not remediation and perceptions of them as "problems" still exist.

A review of research concerning the teaching of international students, suggested that a significant proportion of the literature focused on the deficit approach to learning and included a range of potentially patronising recommendations (Lee 1997; Collingridge 1999). Warwick's 2005 study of teaching staff found that reported views of the classroom behaviour of students from Asia often focused on the perceived problems that these international students bring with them. These problems included limited spoken and written English language ability; a low level of participation in class and group work; a reluctance to demonstrate critical thinking skills; misunderstandings in relation to referencing and academic misconduct and difficult relationships with British students in class. This is suggestive of an uncritical ethnocentrism in the relationship between international students and lecturers from the ethno-cultural majority (Gilborn 1995; Lawrence and Tatum 1997).

The above discussion has noted that although there can be a certain amount of overlap or interface between academic staff and international students' cultures, significant disparities in role identities and role expectations can result in conflict in academic-student expectations and relationships. Li et al's 2002 study helps to explain this phenomenon by noting that lecturers enact pedagogies based on their epistemological beliefs, professional ideology and their interpretative systems, all of which are culturally bound. International students typically adopt learning strategies that they have developed from their previous learning experience on the premise that their past success will be replicated in their new environment.

2.8 English Language

A major acculturation stressor that some international students face is the potential language barrier. Chen (1999) argued that second language anxiety is a stressor that interacts with other stressors in both academic and sociocultural domains. My experience of working with international students would indicate that they demonstrate a spectrum of English language competency. Students from India and Sri Lanka are likely to have experienced all their education through the medium of

English and they have had open access to a wide range of English language media. At the opposite end of the scale are some students for example from China who may have experienced limited formal English language teaching during their compulsory education and they are likely to have had considerably restricted access to English language media and few opportunities to practice verbal English.

In the academic domain, language barriers can impact on understanding lectures and lecturers, academic reading and writing and the ability to effectively communicate in and out of class (Mori 2000). Authors such as Poyrazli, Arbona and Pisecco (2001), Trice (2003) and Zhang and Brunton (2007) have found that unsurprisingly there is a positive correlation between academic performance and an international student's level of English proficiency. In addition to impacting on academic performance, there is evidence to suggest that language barriers can impede international students' attempts to make friends and interact with the local community (Chen1999 and Mori 2000). An earlier study by Barratt and Huba in 1994, found that those international students who reported improved English competency had increased self-esteem and positively associated their improved language skills with more interpersonal communication with the local population. In their systematic review in 2011, Zhang and Goodson identified English proficiency as a predictor of both psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Furthermore there is significant evidence in the literature demonstrating that lower levels of English proficiency can be a predictor of acculturative stress and depression (Dao, Lee and Chang 2007; Sumer, Poyrazil and Grahame 2008).

A study of Chinese final year undergraduates found that students themselves identified language as being their main area of weakness (Burnapp and Zhao 2011). These authors considered that this should not be interpreted as just concerning formal knowledge of English language, its grammar and vocabulary but more importantly concerning the actual uses of English language expected in the UK style of higher education. This referred to a whole set of skills including amongst others note-taking, researching, summarising, writing and following conventions related to referencing. Burnapp and Zhao's study went on to note that it was understandable that students from the Chinese system of education should experience such difficulties and it needed to be acknowledged that tests such as IELTS are of limited value as they relate only to the formal aspects of language. IELTS is the International English Language Testing System and is the most widely accepted English language test in the world, with over 2 million tests being taken annually (www.ielts.org).

Studies, including that of Mills (1997), Gunn-Lewis and Malthus (2000) and Li et al (2002), have agreed that language difficulties constitute a primary factor impacting on the learning and cultural adaptation of Asian students in particular. Their findings showed that language difficulties did affect students' effective classroom interactions, classroom performance and cultural adaptation. The language theme has similarities with the research of Scholes and Moore (2000) who found that students engaging in international experiences could not take any aspect of communication for granted, as a result of language, accent and emphasis.

There is an institutional expectation that international students commence their studies with the necessary language skills to cope with their academic studies, as well as the everyday demands of living in an English-speaking environment. These expectations are based on students meeting the admissions criteria. The language proficiency of some international students may be adequate for some subjects such as mathematics and computing but may not be sufficient for other subjects such as advertising and journalism, which require a higher level of literacy. It can be concluded that the research suggests that language problems can hamper the process of learning, enculturation and effective communication and this can contribute to the development of negative perceptions and experiences.

Research undertaken by Vaara and Fay in 2011 identified an additional challenge for international students studying business concerning the use of contemporary business related language. This study emphasised the importance of linguistic skills for all students and considered these to be a reflection of symbolic capital. The implication being that the ability to speak in a fashionable and convincing manner reveals the contemporary, competent and knowledgeable image of managers graduating from MBA programmes more than anything else. This research further found that the value of such language skills should not be underestimated, as being able to use the most contemporary language can provide valuable capital in a variety of environments.

This part of the literature review has sought to highlight a number of key variables related to academic study which impact on the international student experience and therefore contribute to the formulation of research questions to address the overall aim of understanding how international students understand their experience in the UK. As a result of these findings I have sought to explore with my participants their past experiences of teaching and learning; how they understand what is expected of them in an academic context; how they interpret the behaviour of their peers and the affect their standard of English language has on their experience.

2.9   Student life

There are many variables which impact on the lives of international students while studying in the UK. These include external factors which the student has no control over such as the change in climate; different food; prejudice and the mix of students in their classes. Personal, internal factors include the impact of the individual student's personality on their ability to reconstitute social networks and their resilience when facing new experiences. Many international student studies focus on the culture shock experienced in the initial stages and the challenges involved in the development of social networks and thus these aspects will provide the foundation for this strand of the literature review.

2.9.1 Impact of peers

International students often come from a mono-cultural background and hence they can have high expectations concerning the international composition of their cohort peers. While some UK HEIs may be able to control cohort composition by country of origin, for the vast majority, the focus will be on meeting recruitment targets and hence there may be an unintentional imbalance in nationalities. For example, Ahmad's 2006 research, set in the context of a high quality research-intensive Australian university found that postgraduate students expected to be working alongside students from different backgrounds, who they would have to work hard to keep up with. Ahmad's study further found that Indian students had not expected to see such a significant domination of the Asian community in their class and location in general. They had expected their class to be more multi-cultural but were disappointed to find a large number of students that seemed to be of a single nationality in their lectures.

The current discourse concerning international student relationships would suggest that there has been an increasing awareness of the relatively low levels of social interaction between home and international students. Several studies have agreed that the integration of international students is a major challenge for both educational institutions (McKinlay, Pattison and Gross 1996) and the wider community (Poyrazli and Grahame 2007). In Australia, Marginson (2002) found that cultural engagement was largely unidirectional as home students expected international students to adjust to them and not vice versa. This is reinforced by Dalglish and Chan's 2005 study which found that international students were concerned that there were insufficient opportunities to meet home students and they considered it important to encourage multi-culturalism inside and outside the classroom. Ultimately social cohesion is dependent not only upon the motivation skills, and opportunities of international students, but also the willingness of the receiving community to facilitate integration.

While universities in most English-speaking nations are now sites of considerable cultural diversity, evidence suggests that home students' take-up of opportunities to engage with students from culturally different backgrounds is generally limited (Dunne 2009 and Harrison and Peacock 2010). Many home students appear to work in ethnically homogeneous groups which can, in extreme cases, result in culturally-segregated classroom environments (Singaram et al 2011). More recent research suggests it is the cohort of students with the least international exposure and experience, those from mono-lingual and mono-cultural backgrounds that are most likely to live out culturally segregated experiences on campus (Colvin et al 2013).

Studies have consistently shown that international students expect and desire frequent contact with host nationals, in both academic and social settings and that perceived lack of intercultural interaction is seen as problematic (Trice 2004; Ward and Masgoret 2004). Zheng and Berry's 1991 study of Chinese students in Canada clearly demonstrated that international students desired more contact with host nationals than they actually had. Although much research indicates that international

students expect and desire to form bonds with their home peers, they are not always successful in doing so (Holmes 2005). A longitudinal study of Asian students before and after arrival in New Zealand found that 92% hoped to make friends with locals whereas only 41% had managed to do so three months after arrival. Additionally, 82% expected to enjoy socialising with locals but only 52% reported this to be the case (Berno and Ward 2003).

Research is equally clear that intercultural contact is perceived as more important and valuable by international students than by their home peers (Smart, Volet and Ang 2000). Part of the reason for the discrepancies between expectation and experiences may be ambivalent attitudes about who should make the first move in relationship building. Smart, Volet and Ang's 2000 study revealed that both Asian students and Australians thought the other should take the initiative. It may also be the case that the tendency for international students to create their own subcultures, where their own language is spoken, inhibits home students and those from the local population from making initial overtures (O'Donoghue 1996; Scott 2004). A quote from Brebner's (2005:50) study from New Zealand by a home student, provides an apt illustration of this dilemma:

"When there were fewer Asian students in my class, I don't mind talking to them. But as the number grew bigger the following year, I found Koreans were talking among themselves in their own language, and Chinese students were doing the same thing too. So I tend to shy away from them when they are speaking in their own languages among themselves".

The apparent reluctance by some international students and some home students to develop social relationships can in some way be explained by Robbins' (1993) discussion of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, which has been referred to earlier in this chapter and will be further discussed in the next chapter. There are various definitions of this term but in the context of individuals it can be defined as the disposition to act which individuals acquire in the earliest stages of socialisation and which they consolidate by their subsequent choices in life. Zembylas (2007:448) further defined habitus as:

"… a set of embodied practices which are to some extent a product of prior experiences - not in the sense of a cluster of dispositions that are static and unavoidable, but rather as embodied practices that are strongly influenced by historical, social and cultural contexts".

This definition could be interpreted as implying that habitus potentially hampers development and transitions, although Harker (1984) argued that part of Bourdieu's theory of habitus includes reference to the possibility for change. This is more in line with McNay (1999) who suggested that courses such as the MBA could lead to highly rewarding personal development experiences that encourage reflection and challenge prevailing values and practices. However, larger scale change is not easy and will often meet with resistance. As discussed by Navarro (2006:16), habitus is created

through social interactions, rather than individual processes leading to patterns that are enduring and transferable from one context to another, but that can also shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. According to Navarro, habitus therefore: "… *is not fixed or permanent and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period*". Where there are increased levels of student diversity there is likely to be a less comfortable fit between past and present experiences and this can lead to a gap in the relationship between parts of the student body and academics' expectations (Sheridan 2010).

Contemporary studies from New Zealand such as those undertaken by Zhang and Brunton in 2007, have noted consistent findings relating to the development of friendships amongst international students, with 55% of the Chinese students surveyed indicating they were unhappy with their opportunities to make friendships with host nationals. Zhang and Brunton (2007) also found that the level of dissatisfaction was highest in Chinese students, followed by students from other Asian countries. Zhang and Brunton's research would suggest that the relatively high level of cultural difference between New Zealand and many Asian countries is likely to reduce the prevalence of intercultural friendships.

The relevance of students originating from collectivist as opposed to individualist cultures and the impact on their social networks has been well documented but there are other relevant, influential factors. Ying's 2002 study of intercultural friendships found that the probability of Taiwanese students forming friendships with Americans was determined by factors such as the individual student's personality, for example extraversion; their knowledge of the US; positive attitudes about forming American friendships; negative attitudes about forming Taiwanese friendships; communications skills and the limited number of Asian students on campus.

The question then arises as to whether international students consider their lack of local social contacts to be a problem and the following research studies' findings would indicate this is the case. Burns' 1991 study in Australia found that 34% of overseas students mentioned a lack of Australian friends as a major problem. Choi's 1997 research with Koreans reported that 67% of students were not satisfied with their relationships with Australians and 56% mentioned difficulty in maintaining contact. Keen's (2000) study of Malaysian students found that cross-cultural contact was one of the least favourable aspects of their New Zealand experience.

A number of researchers, including those mentioned working in New Zealand, have commented on social isolation and the difficulties many international students experience in meeting and developing friendships with locals, despite their expressed desire to do so (Lewthwaite 1996). Studies also revealed that on the whole, international students experience greater difficulties and more anxiety in making friends and have less satisfying relationships than domestic students (Furnham and Tresize 1981, Obong 1997).

53

The lack of contact is disappointing, given the desire for interaction expressed by international students, the general perception of host nationals as friendly and the obvious benefits of intercultural interactions (Smith and Khawaja 2007). There is strong evidence that greater contact with home students is associated with psychological, social and academic adaptation. Having local friends and spending more free time with them is related to lower stress levels (Berry and Kostovcik 1983), positive mood (Furnham and Erdmann 1995), less depression (Klineberg and Hull 1979), and greater life satisfaction, happiness and self-esteem (Noels, Pon and Clement 1996). Satisfaction with host national relations and with one's social support network more broadly are also related to enhanced psychological well-being as demonstrated in Tofi, Flett and Timutimu-Thorpe's 1996 study of Pacific Island students and in Searle and Ward's 1990 study of Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand. This is endorsed by Heidenheimer and Shute (1986) who reported that there is much in the literature which suggests that international students who spend most of their leisure time with host nationals report experiencing fewer problems with cultural, academic and social adjustments, than those international students who have limited contact with host nationals.

Research in this area tends to focus on the international student perspective but Brown and Richards' (2012) qualitative study of British postgraduate students found that contrary to previous similar studies, these students were empathetic and open to new cultures. The caveat to these findings is that the participants were on a postgraduate tourism management degree and so were more likely to be well travelled and predisposed to different cultural experiences.

2.9.2 Social networks and integration

International students necessarily experience disruption as well as loss of social support systems and the familiar means by which that support is socially communicated (Fontaine 1986; Sandhu 1994). For example, Asian participants in Libermans's 1994 study reported feeling emotionally deprived in their host country without their support networks from their home country. While later research by Ong and Ward in 2005 found that international students were likely to find the process of developing social support to be different from their previous experiences.

International students may experience considerable emotional loss when living away from their family. Research by Lee, Koeske and Sales in 2004 found this to be particularly the case in respect of those students from collectivist cultures as they often consist of close-knit families and communities. This can result in some of those international students from collectivist cultures, seeking to dilute their loss by bringing family members to live with them while they study. What is interesting is that there does not appear to be any significant published research on the extent to which this happens nor the impact on international students when spouses and children accompany them. A review of a sample of UK university websites would indicate this practice is not unusual as many offer family accommodation and advice concerning issues such as schooling.

International students are also forced to evolve new ways of obtaining some of the required support, which includes maintaining regular long-distance communication with important sources of support from home and developing new support systems in the host country (Walton 1990). This is illustrated by Khawaja and Stallman's 2011 research which found that frequent phone calls, emails and communication through Skype and social media were used to try to overcome homesickness. The mechanisms for maintaining communication with family and friends in the country of origin were explored with my participants.

Khawaja and Stallman's 2011 study of international students in Australia also found that students were under pressure to meet the demands of their families who had invested emotionally and financially in their goal to study overseas. Lee and Morrish (2010) concluded that Chinese children tend to be respectful and receptive to their parents' plans in order to maintain harmony and the hierarchical relationship. It is from this historical root, which defines the ingrained Chinese cultural values, as noted by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) as typically collectivistic, that is, the need to maintain harmony and loyalty to the in-group, masculine, which typically assigns gender specific roles and high power distance, thus maintaining hierarchical relationships. The next chapter will discuss how particularly cultural capital is primarily transmitted via the family and in this way children acquire certain dispositions which reflect the family status and values (Pimpa 2002). In the context of international education, this relates to parents' aspirations for their children and in some cases the opportunity to provide them with international study options.

In my experience, the majority of international students arrive alone in the UK and therefore face the significant challenge of reconstituting their social networks. Social integration has been found to have a positive effect on academic adjustment and the absence of psychological distress, both factors linked to poor academic performance and student attrition (Chartrand 1992). This link may be considered to be indirect rather than directly causal as it may not be possible to directly link social integration to academic outcomes but I would agree with Chartrand that its association with positive, happier experiences and a reduction in feelings of isolation must, in turn, be connected with retention and therefore, indirectly to performance.

Other research has however, pointed to the fact that establishing strong relationships with other individuals from a common cultural background can raise self-esteem and consequently positively affect the personal adjustment of international students (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998). Social support has been shown to be a significant factor in reducing life-change stress and promoting positive health outcomes, including both physical and psychological well-being (Argyle 1992). Researchers have argued that social support similarly has the ability to ameliorate the consequences of acculturative stress (Adelman 1988; Walton 1990).

A review of the social support literature shows that four core functions are served by supportive behaviours (Wellman 1985; Vaux, Riedel and Stewart 1987). The first of

these is emotional support which is demonstrated by assertions or displays of love, care, concern and sympathy. The second is referred to as social companionship and this is manifested in a sense of belongingness to a social group that provides company for a variety of activities. One of the key advantages of this social companionship is to support international students who are likely to encounter an unfamiliar milieu in moving across cultures and hence the potential for feelings of alienation. Acculturating individuals can suddenly find themselves: *"… lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behaviour"* (Furnham 1988:49).

The third function is tangible assistance which is valued in the form of help such as financial assistance, required services or sharing learning resources. The final function relates to informational support and could include the communication of opinions or facts relevant to an individual's current challenges, for example advice and feedback on assessments. The current practice within the Midlands University provides an integrated, accessible and experienced international student support service with reference to the last two functions. However, the first two functions are more student-centred and require a concerted effort in order to facilitate. These various forms of social support and their relative importance were explored with my participants.

The significance of social network development for international students has been identified in the literature. The issue of intercultural friendships is an important one, with British, Australian and American research agreeing that many international students have few local friends (Bochner, McLeod and Lin 1977; Furnham and Bochner 1982; Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham 1985; Nowak and Weiland 1998; Smart, Volet and Ang 2000; Hotta and Toomey 2013; Rientes and Nolan 2014)). New Zealand studies also reveal a low incidence of intercultural friendships with Aston (1996) reporting that 23% of Asian university students had no New Zealand friends.

2.9.3 Transition shock

It is inevitable that international students will use their previous experiences in their country of origin in order to make comparisons and benchmark their new life in the UK. Ahmad's 2006 study found that in particular students compared the differences in their lifestyle, education institutions and systems. While this could be seen to be a potentially negative activity, Li's 2002 research found that such differences do not necessarily have to be barriers to communication and positive education outcomes. According to Burgoon (1995) apparently conflicting expectations can be both positive and negative. Positive violations will enhance favourable interaction and mutual understanding but negative violations will increase uncertainty and are likely to have unfavourable consequences. A degree of heterogeneity and difference can be a powerful learning tool in a cross cultural context. To minimise the impact of negative experiences, it is important for teaching staff to identify any disparities and to explicitly explain the rationale for a departure from international students' perceived norms and

educational models, although such a strategy assumes an appreciation of these which may not always be the case.

It has already been noted that international students face many challenges in crossing borders to study. They usually encounter an unfamiliar culture with a different set of behavioural standards, new educational institutions and rules, often a foreign language or at least a variation of one they thought they knew, and an unfamiliar natural environment, climate and food. This culture shock, as it is commonly termed (Oberg 1960), can manifest itself in many forms including anxiety, insecurity, insomnia, loneliness and a general sense of unhappiness (Rohrlich and Martin 1991; Church 1982). In their studies of culture shock, Furnham, Bochner and Lonner (1986), found that social contact with the local population and prior international experience were the two most important factors involved in the coping process of international students in a foreign university.

A pervasive component of the international student experience is the need to learn about negotiating a new culture (Ong and Ward 2005). This would imply that international students may have different needs when compared to home students in terms of accessing staff in order to understand their new academic culture. However research by Bradley in 2000 found that the extent to which international students require more help than home students to adjust to higher education is open to debate. Some home students from backgrounds which differ significantly from the received culture of some of the more established campuses, may experience a form of culture shock, whereby they feel excluded from the mainstream (Reay 2012).

Conversely, some international students may have limited difficulty adjusting to the new culture. Furnham (1997:16) defined culture shock as: *"… individuals lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behaviour".* Furnham reflected that much of the research in the area of culture shock is descriptive and fails to explain the factors which sustain the condition or affects its intensity. In earlier work, Furnham and Bochner (1986) considered a range of concepts to explain the cause of culture shock, for example, grief reaction to loss of the home country; expectations of the host country which are unfulfilled, stressful life events triggered by the sojourn; changes in social support networks and perceived differences in the values between cultures.

More recent research suggested that culture shock is only a subcategory of the transition experience and so use of that term implied that it had the status of an illness linked to differences between the country of origin and the country of study (Bennett 1998). In reality, the transition is much like that which individuals experience in their everyday lives when confronted with change. Instead of culture shock, Bennett uses the term transition shock to describe the transition of experiencing living in a different country or culture. She defined transition shock as: *"… the state of loss and disorientation precipitated by a change in one's familiar environment that requires adjustment"* (p.216). Hess and Linderman (2002: 155) used an alternative term,

change overload, to describe the changes experienced by individuals who relocate, noting that:

"… human beings make sense of the world and their lives by following routines and taking familiar things for granted but during an international move, there are no comforting routines. Everything changes at once".

International students must inevitably engage with a sociocultural system that is different from their own when they pursue their academic studies in the medium of English in a UK institution. For example, socio-cultural constructs or norms which are characteristic to many English speaking communities include the value of intellectual property, self-reliance and the right of individuals to refuse a request with which they are not comfortable (Hinkel 2001). Adaptability can be defined as the capacity for an individual to suspend or change behaviour common to their own culture, to learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways, and ultimately: *"… find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural difference/unfamiliarity, intergroup posture and the accompanying stress"* (Kim 1991:268).

Adaptation involves interaction and interaction can develop, as well as deter one's process of cultural adaptation. This means that there is unlikely to be substantial positive cultural adaptation without adequate levels of interaction. This implies that adaptation involves not only the classroom culture but also the international students' social life. It is generally believed that wide networks of friendships, including a co-national network, networks of host nationals and multicultural networks, will quicken the process of international students' cultural adaptation (Bochner, McLeod and Lin 1977). However many international students in Li's 2002 study had not established such networks in cross cultural adaptation. This research found that Asian students in particular, engaged in cultural learning and skill enhancement through interaction and had to make appropriate changes to fit in with the learning environment, even though they may feel traumatised by the cultural differences. My research explores the extent to which my participants experienced transition shock and in particular how their experiences changed in the period between the first and second interviews.

2.9.4 Stereotyping

I acknowledge that international students are by no means a homogeneous group and the participants in my study are no exception as they come from a range of ages, experiences, countries of origin and faiths (Harris 1997). What I am interested in here is how these students interact with and regard other international students from diverse backgrounds. Research recognises the ease with which: *"… we can fall into the trap of cultural stereotyping",* arguing that, whilst labels such as *"the Chinese learner"* (Watkins and Biggs 1996) and *"the East Asian learner"* may capture certain characteristics, trends and patterns, such labels also carry the implication that these groups of learners are uniform, and overlook the importance of individual difference and the influence of motivation and personality (Gu and Maley 2008:226).

A 2006 study of Chinese students identified them as: *"… lacking in the capacity for critical thinking"* and their: *"failure"* in this regard was attributed to their cultural background so that western education has to: *"… remedy these deficiencies"* (Clark and Gieve 2006:56). This characterisation of Chinese students and China's heritage of scholarly argumentation, according to Singh (2010), reflects a level of ignorance. Defining China's significant intellectual heritage, ascertaining its transnational communicability and deciding with whom it can be communicated are challenges. So too is there a challenge for insiders and outsiders alike of not reproducing orientalist accounts of China. For example, Hung in 2003, discussed the oscillation between naïve idealisation and racist bias in western conceptions of China.

Although many sources have argued that international students are stereotyped by their peers, academic and support staff, as well as members of the general public, most of this information is derived from anecdotal rather than empirical evidence (Ward 2006). Given that the international student population is composed of such a diverse group of individuals, it would be surprising if home students shared universally-held beliefs about them. In her study of perceptions of international students at a US university in 2001, Spencer- Rodgers found that international stereotypes combined positive features (intelligent, adventurous, hard-working, determined, friendly, eager to learn and worldly) as well as negative features (different, socially maladjusted, poor language skills, naïve, unsociable) but on balance, the image was more favourable than unfavourable.

One of the few empirical studies to examine the mutual stereotypes of international domestic students was undertaken by Bond in 1986. He focused on the constructive aspects of stereotyping and their role in maintaining harmonious intercultural contact. Bond found that stereotypes held by Americans and Chinese were strong, comprehensive and generally in agreement, with the Americans cast as more open, extrovert and emotionally expressive. Complementary research by Berno and Ward in 2003, revealed that feelings of threat and competition from international students were generally low. With for example 16% of the 543 New Zealand students sampled in this study agreeing that international students get too much attention and 15% agreeing that international students have a negative effect on the quality of education. Overall attitudes were moderately positive with 56% agreeing that international students had qualities which New Zealand students admired.

Despite these encouraging trends, it is likely that the perceptions domestic students hold about their international peers, varies as a function of their nationality or region of origin. Certainly this is true of New Zealanders' attitudes towards migrants. In this case, more favourable perceptions were identified in respect of those from Australia and the UK, compared to those from South Africa, who in turn were viewed more favourably than those from Asia and the Pacific (Ward and Masgoret 2005). Similarly, research in the US, has demonstrated that evaluations of the English accents of international students, who are non-native English speakers, vary, with Chinese and Mexican English evaluated negatively when compared to the accents of non-native English speakers from Europe (Lindemann 2005). So accents can

influence the perception of individuals which can result in stereotyping behaviour. Accents can complicate comprehension for international students and this issue was raised by a number of my participants as a cause for concern.

There exists an inherent warning to be wary when attempting to categorise individuals in neat packages with expectations of dominating influences of demographics, such as country of origin, a point emphasised in Waller's 2006 study. Here Waller examined the usefulness of defining "mature" students as a homogeneous group, subsequently sub-dividing them by ethnicity, class, gender and age, finding the group to be too complex and heterogeneous to offer representation from research undertaken in this format.

The labelling and identification of international students as part of an "out-group" can lead to them seeking solace in each other and thus recreating their social capital. International students could be expected to experience marginalisation because of their status, language ability, cultural differences and financial limitations, with the combination of these deterring them from engaging with mainstream students. The classification of international students as an "out-group" is likely to influence the integration process for them. However a subtle form of discrimination more commonly experienced by international students would be to treat them exactly the same as all other students, thus not making allowances or giving credit for their cultural experiences.

2.9.5 Prejudice and discrimination

Unfortunately not all intercultural contact between international and home students is equal status, voluntary and cooperative and so discrimination has been identified as another potential acculturative stressor. International students from Asia, Africa, India, Latin America and the Middle East have reported significant perceived discrimination when compared to home or European students (Hanassab 2006; Lee and Rice 2007; Poyrazil and Lopez 2007).

Research studies have been situated in a variety of locations with a range of international students and as such the results are predictably varied, although essentially consistent in that there is evidence of prejudice and discrimination amongst the international student body. In an American university, Sodowsky and Plake (1992), reported that although 41% of international students said that Americans treated them well, 15% indicated that their treatment was superficial and another 17% described their treatment as negative. In the same study 41% of international students said that they treated Americans in a friendly manner but 10% were reserved and cautious, 9% said the interactions were superficial and 6% indicated that they did not try to make friends with American students. A more recent study set in Australia by Khawaj and Stallman in 2011, found that even though most encounters with the local community were positive, there were incidents of harassment and discrimination. Bradley, researching in the UK in 2000, noted that international students in her study felt marginalized and isolated from UK students.

The perception was that while UK students were outwardly friendly, relationships rarely went past the superficial stage and it was difficult to know who was a friend.

Research suggests that it is not uncommon for international students to perceive prejudice and discrimination (Scott 1998). In 1979 Klineberg and Hull reported on their findings of international students in eleven countries and noted that around 30% of international students considered that they had been subject to discrimination. In a 1995 study of an Australian university, Mullins, Quintrell and Hancock reported that on campus prejudice and discrimination was a serious problem for 7% of international students. While in New Zealand, 35% of international students reported experiencing discrimination from home students, on a scale of sometimes to very often (Ward and Masgoret 2004).

More recently, Philo's 2007 study of Chinese students in the UK, found that around half had experienced discrimination. This often took the form of rudeness and perceived discrimination in the work place, with the perception that preferential treatment was being given to white colleagues. Other Chinese students commented on what they considered to be institutional discrimination in relation to police registration, as they had not been provided with a rationale as to why this process was needed for them and not for other nationalities and also the conduct of banks, who they considered to be unhelpful. This concurs with findings of a study by Brown and Brown (2013) where this practice was perceived by Chinese students as discriminatory. The most serious instances of discrimination reported by Philo were cases of physical or verbal abuse and Chinese students felt that they had been singled out because they were foreign.

Perceptions of discrimination are often stronger in students who are more culturally diverse compared to members of the host population. For example, European students in the US disagreed that there was prejudice while African, Asian and South American students, in that order, found discrimination problematic. Asian students in New Zealand reported more discrimination than those from Europe, North America and Australia (Ward and Masgoret 2004). Perceptions of discrimination were stronger in sojourners compared to immigrant students and in those with weaker language skills. There is evidence to suggest that perceived discrimination also increased over time (Sodowsky and Plake 1992, Ward and Masgoret 2004). The correlates of perceived discrimination are almost exclusively negative and include increased stress, more identity conflict, less academic satisfaction and greater psychological and sociocultural adjustment problems (Pak, Dion and Dion 1991; Perucci and Hu 1995; Berno and Ward 1998; Leong and Ward 2000).

While it cannot be doubted that prejudice and discrimination can have a significant impact on the individual concerned, there are also wider organisational and indeed sector implications. Recent tragic incidents such as the murders in Salford of an Indian engineering postgraduate student in December 2011 and of a Sri Lankan graduate in October 2013 in Sheffield, highlight that discrimination can take a severe form. Such rare but globally publicised incidents, can create significant fear amongst

international students and their families and thus adversely impact on recruitment from the region of origin of the victim, as a result of intense media reporting.

This strand of the literature review has focused on international student relationships. It has drawn on a range of studies to identify the challenges international students can face when seeking to reconstitute their social networks in their new environment and this discussion has contributed to the development of my research questions. Research such as that conducted by Posner et al (1982) found that being in a different situation facilitates the challenging of values, beliefs, preconceptions, interpersonal relationships and skills in order to bring about conceptual changes and this was explored with my participants.

While there is clearly extensive, global interest in how international students experience higher education when studying overseas and there is some consensus as to what factors impact of that experience, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative findings concerning the lived experiences of these students. What can be agreed is that developing an understanding of the key influences on international students' experiences is critical to ensuring that these students have a positive experience as not only can this impact on the individual concerned but also on institutions' reputation management and their financial income.

My evaluation of the literature has identified two specific gaps which were explored with my participants. The first of these is the impact on families when the international student moves away from home, both on those left behind and also in the case of two of my participants, when family members accompany the student. Secondly, most of the literature concerning international student relationships has concentrated on the relationships between home and international students, while this is clearly of interest as much has been written about it, I also investigated relationships between international students, particularly with regard to the earlier stereotype discussion.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework – loss and acquisition

3.1   Capital framework

Many of the academic challenges faced by international students are concerned with their differing cultural capital. The same principle applies to the social aspects of their experience, as discussed in the last chapter and these can be linked to the loss and reconstruction of social capital to various degrees. Thus Bourdieu's capital theory can help to shed light on some of these issues. In addition, the impact on identity of cultural transition will be explored theoretically with consideration being given to how the loss and acquisition of various forms of capital and identity might be inter-related.

Social scientists have conceptualised resources in terms of metaphors based on the idea of "capital" which literally refers: *"… to sources of profit, advantage and power, as well as net assets and resources"* (Cote 2005:224). Bourdieu (1986:241) defined capital thus:

"Capital, which in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and has a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world i.e. the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success of practices".

Bourdieu's capital theory can help us to understand the loss and acquisition of various forms of capital including in particular cultural and social capital. Bourdieu distinguished between economic, cultural (including intellectual), and social capital (including networks). For Bourdieu, theoretical concepts are: *"… polymorphic, supple and adaptive, rather than defined calibrated and used rigidly"* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:23) and this facilitates their application to different contexts, including higher education.

My analysis of my data is further developed by the work of Baruch et al (2005), influenced by Useem and Karabel (1986). Baruch et al (2005) developed a model designed to evaluate the capital that students acquire from pursuing higher education. This theory suggested that obtaining a management qualification can add value to graduates by endowing them with five forms of capital: defined as cultural, social, inner-value, market-value and intellectual, thus extending Bourdieu's capital theory and specifically applying it to an educational experience. I have added identity capital, often regarded as a subset of social capital, to my discussion as identity was identified as a key concept in the literature review. The link between social capital and identity has been made by authors such as Eze (2011:304), where he suggested that: *"… a person's identity is therefore in a continuous mode of negotiation through identity politicking to win social capital".*

While authors such as Putnam in 2000 and Sullivan in 2002 have contrasted cultural and social capital, Bourdieu claimed that the concept of cultural capital is indivisible from that of social capital (1986). He proposed that the cultural capital related way of speaking (later referred to as linguistic capital), being and doing, as well as the acquisition of cultural goods as symbolic goods, were used to guarantee a social capital or capital of social relationships. These forms of capital therefore appear to be appropriate to the study of the international student experience as these individuals often come from cultures where such capital may reflect different culturally-specific values. This chapter will focus on social and cultural capital, whilst acknowledging the relevance to my study of inner-value, market-value and intellectual capital.

Bourdieu developed the concept of field to define the structured social spaces in which agents take up positions relating to the amount of relevant capital they possess. Navarro (2006) further defined a field as a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational or cultural. For the purposes of my research, Midlands University is regarded as a field, providing a setting in which social and cultural capital, inter alia, play a role in the lives of international students. Bourdieu viewed society as a complex of interlinked fields and subfields such as education (Vaara and Fay 2011). Bourdieu saw these fields in society as governed by an exchange of capital and emphasised that actors have access to and strive to gain various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1980). My research will seek to explore how this theory can be applied to the international student experience.

According to Bourdieu all forms of capital are the products of investments and resources to be exploited and each form of capital can be transformed into another (1993). For example in the context of international higher education, parent's economic capital can be shared with their child to finance their education which can result in enhanced forms of social and cultural capital for both the individual student and the entire family. In this way Bourdieu's capital theory can help us to understand how the loss and acquisition of various forms of capital can impact on the transitional experiences of international students. This was illustrated in the previous chapter where Bennett (1998) defined the term transition shock to describe the experience of encountering a different culture, where a state of loss or disorientation may result in a period of adjustment, which may in turn result in enhanced cultural, social and inner-value capital.

It would be reasonable to assume that international students face different challenges due to their possession, acquisition and loss of different forms of capital. International students may be different as a result of their previous educational experiences, their English language proficiency (linguistic capital) or because they originate from a developing economy. This is because through the movement of capital some individuals and groups have access to different choices. Thus the concept of capital helps to explain how particular cultures are generated through social, cultural and economic mechanisms and institutions such as schools and universities. In a sense

then the various forms of capital mark the different resources and values around which power relations are exercised in a particular field. The struggle for possession of capital thus indicates not only the uneven distribution of available resources but also their circulation.

Two further theoretical frameworks help us to understand the experience of international students and both of these are based on the premise that adjustment is the ultimate aim and so is also the ultimate measure of a successful sojourn. It should be recognised that there is limited consensus and clarity as to what adjustment means, as the construct has been described and measured in varying ways. The first of these frameworks is the recuperation models which are commonly represented by a U-shaped curve and focus on recovery from culture shock. This theory was first developed by Lysgaard in his 1955 study of Norwegian Fulbright Scholars in the US (Church 1982). Oberg (1960) provided further detail to the model by defining the stages of adjustment as an initial high on first arrival; subsequent disenchantment leading to culture shock (described as a crisis potentially leading to a mental breakdown); recovery and eventually full adjustment and effective functioning in the new culture.

Several years later, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), added a second U to the curve to account for international students' reacculturation experiences on their return home. While this research is very dated, it is still valid and the latter concept is echoed in later research by Cannon in 2000. He also found evidence amongst his Indonesian sample of international students that they experienced reverse culture-shock when they returned home. These international students felt like strangers in their own country and considered that they were discriminated against by their sponsor employers for leaving their home country to study overseas.

The second theoretical perspective involves culture learning models that view cross-cultural adaptation as an on-going learning process. Their central premise of these models is that to adapt, it is necessary to learn the norms and rules of the new sociocultural system. Culture learning is explained in two ways, focusing on communication (Church 1982; Scollon and Scollon 1997) and behavioural learning (Atherton 2003). In the case of culture, learning, communication and effective interaction with members of the host culture is seen as the key to adjustment. It is through communication with others that the new culture is learned. This links to an earlier discussion where various studies confirmed that international students were found to be disappointed with the limited relationships with home students and suggests this may adversely affect the international student experience. Models of behavioural learning suggest that effective adjustment lies in implementing appropriate social behaviours. Social behaviour results in either reinforcing or aversive stimulators. In order to learn to engage appropriately and effectively in a new culture, the individual needs to understand these stimulators so cultural capital acquisition can occur through trial and error (Paige 1993).

65

3.2   Cultural capital

Cultural capital is one of Bourdieu's most widely discussed relational concepts which exists in conjunction with economic and social capital and to that end Reay (2004a) is in agreement with Bourdieu in asserting that it cannot be understood in isolation. Bourdieu's work in this area stemmed from a sociological analysis designed to investigate why fewer working class students entered the French higher education system (Robbins 1993). Bourdieu analysed the performance of students within a sample of French higher education institutions and concluded that working class students were less successful than their middle-class counterparts because the curriculum content was biased in favour of those subjects with which middle class students were already familiar. Thus Bourdieu concluded that the working class students were poorly endowed with cultural capital (1986).

One of the ways in which cultural capital theory helps to shed light on the problem I am investigating and which I then use to analyse my findings concerns its transmission within the family (O'Shea 2015). I had not initially considered the influence of family to be of significant interest to this study but when interviewing participants it became very clear that for many of them, the influence and role of their parents was critical in their decision making and this reinforces Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu discussed the domestic transmission of cultural capital and the importance of hereditary transmission as well as the investment in education by the family unit in Richardson's 1986 research text. Bourdieu noted that the length of time for which an individual could prolong this acquisition process was dependent on the length of time for which a family could provide financial support. In particular, he found that this related not just to the time spent accumulating cultural capital but also by the usable time, (often in the form of the mother's free time), to ensure the transmission of capital and to facilitate a longer period in full time education.

The importance of family and class in the acquisition of cultural capital has been discussed in a number of studies involving international students. These include a study of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau by Li and Bray (2006), where different types of capital were assessed amongst Chinese students from different classes. Rather predictably, this study found that the most cultural capital was possessed by the professional class and this produced the greatest number of university scholarship students. The implication being that the cultural class of families translated into enhanced educational attainment for offspring. However research has also found that families who possess high levels of cultural capital also tend to possess other socioeconomic resources which have a positive effect on educational success (Sullivan 2001; Jaeger 2009). Furthermore children who possess high levels of cultural capital typically also possess other skills which promote educational success such as high innate ability and high educational aspirations (Jaeger 2011).

The central role that mothers play within the family in the transmission of cultural capital, linked to their children's academic success was demonstrated in a study of

the role of various forms of capital of Chinese students in Hong Kong and Canada by Waters in 2005. In the case of many of the families of the students involved in my study, there was evidence of raised expectations by parents as a result of their child's international education experience. Implicit in the concept is the expectation of a social trajectory that enables conditions of living that are improved. This could be said to be the case with the rising middle classes in developing economies such as India and China, where parents and often wider families, perhaps for the first time, have the opportunity to offer their children higher educational opportunities at home and overseas. It is also interesting to note that in these cultures there is an expectation that children will ultimately be entirely responsible for the care of their parents as they age, thus any investment in higher education has an expectation of benefits for more than just the individual student but rather for the wider family in the longer term. Education is perceived as the ticket to a brighter, better future, as an investment with the promise of a good return, not only for the children themselves, but for their parents. In securing this investment parents are willing to make sacrifices to secure a better future for their children and family. This concurs with research which highlighted that education, to Chinese parents, is viewed as a key to social mobility, thus emphasis is placed on education and it is seen as a long term investment, with benefits, not only for the child but also for the family (Shek 2006).

In 2005 Rizvi, found that many Indian students were already engaged with the global economy and culture and had within their worldview, knowledge of family influences and how they relate to western cultural and educational practices. India, as Rizvi further discussed, also has a distinctly colonial imprint. This means that western ideas of life and living are interlaced with Indian values. Significant to this is the fact that the majority of Indian students have been taught in English and some from more affluent families will have attended private church affiliated schools. For these reasons, many Indian students who travel overseas for education have global, cosmopolitan imaginary already developed. This suggests that students from this region may have a cultural advantage over other international students such as those from China who may face significant linguistic and cultural challenges. This hypothesis was explored with my participants.

There is a consensus that cultural capital is primarily transmitted via the family and in this way children acquire certain dispositions which reflect the family status and values. This is substantiated by various studies including that of Abhayawansa and Fonseca (2010) who found that amongst Sri Lankan students, the family had a dominant influence in the decision to pursue higher education overseas. These researchers found that in collectivist cultures it is usual for parents and often members of the extended family and friends to have a significant influence on educational decisions. The result may mean that children have a deep obligation to their parents and wider family to be academically successful and thereby repay the significant financial and emotional investment. This proposition was supported by a number of participants involved in my study.

A further aspect of the influence of family was researched by Nowotny in 1981, when the term emotional capital was used for the first time. Emotional capital is described as a form of social capital used to refer to the social and cultural resources generated through affective relationships, especially in the sphere of the family. Emotional capital was described as the: "… *knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network, characterised at least partly by affective ties*" (Nowotny 1981:148). Endorsing Bourdieu's analysis of women as being largely responsible for maintaining social relationships, Nowotny considered emotional capital as a resource women have in greater abundance than men which takes the form of personal resources that mothers pass onto their children (Reay 2000).

More recently, Reay (2004b) has used the term emotional capital as a heuristic device, to denote the emotional resources passed on from mother to child. Reay's work is focused on mothers' emotional involvement in their children's education and explored the extent to which emotional capital may be understood as a specifically gendered capital. Reay emphasised the close relationship between educational success, emotional capital and emotional well-being in the family. Reay also discussed the importance of viewing emotional capital as an investment in others, thus highlighting the emotional costs of those involved and particularly the costs for parents. These themes were explored when interviewing participants in this study.

According to Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital exists in three states. In its objectified state, cultural capital consists of humanly created objects such as art, books, instruments, machines etc. In its institutionalised state it refers to educational qualifications (and so includes education in an overseas context) and finally in its embodied state it consists of permanent dispositions in the individual person defined as habitus. Habitus is a central feature of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and he used it to emphasise the productive, generative power of a habitus, compared to the mechanical, repetitive nature of a habit. Bourdieu offered this extended definition in his 1993 work:

"… the habitus is a product of conditionings which tend to reproduce the objective logic of those conditionings while transforming it. It's a kind of transforming machine that leads us to "reproduce" the social conditions of our own production …" (1993:87).

In the same text Bourdieu suggested that the acquisition of habitus depends mainly on the family's cultural capital and its transmission and therefore an individual's habitus is a form of capital. This initial acquisition of cultural capital occurs as a result of the socialisation process within families with strong cultural capital and so Bourdieu considered this to be a hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital between social classes. This then assumes that the same relative positions and structures are maintained over time which conflicts with the concept of social mobility and the rising middle classes, particularly in developing countries such as China and India.

Bourdieu suggested that success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and of higher class habitus (1986). The issue of class poses a challenge when applying this theory to international students as their habitus may not necessarily be easily categorised as simply high or low class when compared to their domestic counterparts, it will however almost certainly be different and as such the concept of class has not been considered relevant in this study. At the same time it is likely that economic capital will be relatively high as only those who can afford international tuition fees (or access funds via a scholarship or employer support) and the associated expenses of studying overseas, have the option to study overseas and thus intellectual capital is reproduced by more affluent families as a result of their economic capital.

There are a number of benefits linked to international study that cannot be captured purely in terms of monetary value, such as the increased status that may be derived from an extended period of study overseas. It is acknowledged that in order to be successful in the present global environment, students must develop some key global cultural skills (Cant 2004). Research with international students found they consider that English has become the predominant business language in the global economy and so it would be reasonable to assume that proficiency is likely to enhance career opportunities (Andrade 2006).

Within the research concerning cultural capital, there is increasing interest in cultural intelligence, or what Imel (2000) referred to as international literacy. This refers to widening ways of perceiving and operating within situations and often refers to individuals who have come from a mono-cultural environment who recognise the potential for parochialism as a result of their limited multi-cultural exposure. A more recent definition from Thomas and Inkson (2004:182) defined cultural intelligence as: *"… a multifaceted competency consisting of cultural knowledge, the practice of mindfulness and the repertoires of behavioural skills".* Thus it can be said that cultural intelligence is a capability that allows individuals to understand and act appropriately across a wide range of cultures (Thomas 2006). There is a further sense of transition in that Ang et al (2004) referred to an individual's ability to adjust to diverse cultural situations, while Ng and Earley (2006) refer to the need to adapt to various cultural settings.

Cultural intelligence can be sub-divided into four key elements: the first is meta-cognition, defined as an individual's knowledge or control over cognition that leads to deep information processing (Ang et al 2004). As such it is not sufficient to be self-aware to have high cultural intelligence but rather individuals must be flexible in their self-concept and have the ability to integrate new components into their self-concept. The second element refers to cognition in the sense of using knowledge of self, the social environment and information processing to better understand a culture. Ang et al (2004) defined it as information gained from experience and education that involves specific norms, practices and conventions, including universal facets of culture, as well as culture-specific differences.

The third element is motivation. Earley et al (2006) considered that this facet of cultural intelligence included three primary motivators: enhancement or wanting to feel good about oneself; growth, or wanting to challenge and improve oneself; and continuality, or the desire of continuity and predictability in one's life. This component directs and motivates an individual's adaptation to a new cultural setting. The final aspect is behaviour, that is to say an individual's ability to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviours when interacting with those from a different cultural background. Crowne's research in 2008 found that those individuals who had experience of education overseas generated higher levels of cognitive, motivational and behavioural cultural intelligence. This is indicative of the potentially positive impact of overseas study on the understanding that such education can provide more opportunities to interact with individuals from different cultures. The extent to which my participants experienced these four aspects of cultural intelligence will be considered in this study.

Linguistic capital has been identified as an important element of cultural capital. Bourdieu defined linguistic capital as the capacity to produce expressions for a particular market*:" … all speech is produced for and through the market to which it owes its existence and its most specific properties",* Bourdieu (1992:76). This means that each speaker in a linguistic community possesses a certain quantity of linguistic capital and the more of this capital that is possessed, the more that individual is able to exert symbolic power (Thompson 1992). In 1977, Bourdieu and Boltanski argued that symbolic power is exercised on markets which allow actors to convert one form of capital into another. In the context of linguistic capital this means that one of the outcomes of a good education (a form of cultural capital) may mean speaking a second language (linguistic capital, this may be helpful in securing a good job with a multinational organisation which pays well (economic capital) and this career success is likely to enhance both individual and family status, a form of symbolic capital. A study by Sullivan (2002) emphasised the importance of the ability to understand and use educated language which means that the possession of cultural capital varies with social class. The education system assumes the possession of cultural capital and this can make it difficult for pupils from lower classes to succeed. The same could be said of many international students who may be at a linguistic disadvantage as a result of studying and being assessed in their second language.

The effects of culture on international students' ability to communicate and participate effectively within academic discourses and communities is often underestimated. Research undertaken by Hall and Wai-Ching Sung in 2009 found that the possession of advanced language and study skills were considered key competencies for international student success. This challenge is compounded by the further addition of the specific British academic culture. This has been defined by Cortazzi and Jin (1996:76) as: "… *the systems of beliefs, expectations and cultural practices about how to perform academically"*. This implies that academic norms may seem obvious to academic staff, but these are not always made explicit to all students as there is an expectation that they are shared and so understood. Cortazzi and Jin argued that

academic culture works because it is implicit in participants' behaviour and academic practices.

In the same article, Cortazzi and Jin (1996:76) proposed two further associated concepts. The first of these is that through cultures of learning, they referred to: *"… cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning expectations about classroom behaviour and what constitutes good work"*. The second concept refers to a culture of communication as: "… *expected ways of communicating and interpreting others' communication in a cultural group*". Together, these three aspects of culture interact within the teaching and learning environment as international students draw on their own specific cultural frameworks in shaping their own behaviour and interpreting other peoples' actions and performance.

Using critical discourse analysis and cross-cultural communication theory, Lawrence (2001), described higher education as a rapidly changing climate, affected by diversity which means that common internal language acquisition is essential. This implies that in order to integrate all students into a higher education environment, they have to speak the language acceptable to academics. As already established, a proportion of these academics will assume that languages and literacies, other than those of the dominant mainstream, represent a deficit on the part of that student. Furthermore, Lawrence considered it to be an institutional responsibility to facilitate this process to ensure that students acquired the ability to access and engage in these unfamiliar discourses.

This recommendation poses a significant challenge for UK HEIs. There is a generally agreed threshold of English language competency around IELTs 6 or equivalent, in order to meet with visa entry requirements. Research by Hall and Sung in 2009 acknowledged that tests such as IELTs are effective mechanisms for assessing international students' language abilities in speaking, listening, writing and reading comprehension. However such tests have not been designed to assess essential academic skills such as note-taking, report writing, exam techniques, verbal presentations and working with other students. As Todd (1997:175) noted: *"… to see overseas students' study problems as solely arising from linguistic limitations is an oversimplification".* Academic competency should be separated from linguistic development as: *"… the former will not necessarily enhance the latter; nor does the proficiency of the latter presuppose competence in the former"* (Sowden 2003:377).

Much of the discourse used around higher education is linked with an interpretation of the purpose of the student experience. Round's (2005) study of discourses cites examples of university being compared to the "real world", thus devaluing the university experience. The discourse surrounding the description of university as a place where students learn to think makes assumptions that students will learn the capacity to form and express original ideas but this is likely to be significantly affected by language competency. Round highlighted the significant potential for damaging communications and lack of harmony to develop in the wrong circumstances. If there are no fundamental basic definitions which are standard, the rules of what is

acceptable, expected or prohibited to say in different contexts can be misunderstood and, following that, words are used to say things which do not need, or, indeed, should not be said.

Round's work also reflected on discourse clashes at home, describing the small scale "chipping away" of comfortable communication in a home environment, where the student's language is changing. These clashes are likely to be felt more acutely for students where the environments are starkly contrasted, as is likely to be the case with the majority of international students, where their changed English language may be a cause for concern. However, it could be argued that where the first language is likely to be spoken in most international students' homes, these changes in English language may be less visible.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) linguistic capital is a component of cultural capital that predisposes the children of the privileged classes to academic success but a clear definition of the concept was not provided and other writings of Bourdieu do not deal with this limitation. However, using Bourdieu's concept as a point of departure, Sullivan (2001:893) defined linguistic capital as: *"… the ability to understand and use educated language".* In the previous chapter linguistic challenges were identified as a significant issue for many international students and thus even those international students with reasonable English language competency may be at a disadvantage if their academic vocabulary is limited.

The discussion of cultural capital has been further developed by the term global cultural capital. In the context of a study of Korean students in US institutions, the term was used to refer to degree attainment, knowledge, taste and cosmopolitan attitude and lifestyle. These factors were understood as exclusive resources that designate one's class and status, they can operate globally and can be exchanged with others (Kim 2011). This development of the interpretation of cultural capital illustrates the impact of globalisation and provides a useful point of reference when considering the motivation of international students and their families.

Research by Leong and Ward in 2000 indicated that greater perceived cultural distance is associated with more co-national interaction and less satisfaction with host national relations. Smith and Khawaja (2011) supported this theory as they found that Asian students from collectivist cultures may experience difficulties when interacting and attempting to make friends in a western culture that emphasises individualism, assertiveness and self-sufficiency over interdependence and relatedness. In other studies international students have reported perceptions of less social support than domestic students (Hechanova-Alampay et al 2002; Khawaja and Dempsey 2008) and more loneliness and homesickness (Parr and Bradley 1991; Rajapaksa and Dundes 2002).

The educational environment is a microcosm of the larger society and reflects its values, traditions and practices. Hofstede's (1980) research on work-related values combined with Triandis' (1990) critical analysis of cultural variability provide

interpretative frameworks for understanding the implicit curriculum that varies across cultures and affects classroom activities. Two dimensions that exert strong influences on classroom communication and interaction are individualism-collectivism and power distance.

In the broadest terms, students from individualist cultures such as those found in Western Europe, are more likely to want to be noticed in class and as such they will tend to ask and answer questions and be keen to engage in debate. They can be considered to be competitive in their behaviour. Those students from collectivist cultures, including East and South Asians and Latin Americans, by contrast, are more likely to be motivated to fit in and as such they are likely to be less willing to engage in classroom discussions as it may draw attention to themselves (Rosenberg et al 2008).

The differences between individualist and collectivist perspectives on education and learning have been summarised by Ho, Holmes and Cooper (2004). They found that in collectivist cultures, education is viewed as a means of gaining prestige and joining a high status group. This contrasts with individualist cultures, where education tends to be seen as a way to enhance economic worth and self-esteem. With reference to learning attitudes, students from collectivist cultures tend to value education rooted in tradition and expect to learn how to do, while students from individualist cultures place more value on novel perspectives and learning how to learn.

The term power distance was first conceptualised by Hofstede in 1980 (Hofstede 1980, cited in Earley 1999:193). He identified four value dimensions in his study of the cultural norms of different countries. These were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualist-collectivist and masculinity-femininity. According to Hofstede (1997:28) power distance is defined as: *"… the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally".* In a high power distance culture each member is expected to maintain their rightful place in society, with those who hold higher status being allowed to exercise their power over the members of lower status (Samovar and Porter 1991:129). In such cultures hierarchy is considered to be both beneficial and appropriate with the actions of authorities facing few challenges as obedience is expected from members of lower power. In contrast, a low power distance culture is one in which members believe in minimising unequal power and so hierarchical structures are resisted and authority figures are challenged (Lustig and Koester 1993:136).

This section has explained Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, including the role of habitus and the importance of the family. Bourdieu's discussion of cultural capital is not without its critics. Researchers such as Sullivan (2002:153) have commented on: *"… the obscurity of Bourdieu's prose … to protect his own work from refutation".* Sullivan does however go on to acknowledge that the concept of cultural capital has been influential but at the same time it is not clearly defined. For example, it is not clear to what extent educational credentials are a mechanism of social reproduction

or of social mobility. Some of the empirical findings on cultural capital appear to contradict one another and this may be partly as a result of the studies being undertaken in different countries at different times. It may be that cultural capital is more valued in some countries than in others and thus operates differently in different countries. This makes it a particularly interesting subject to explore in the context of international students.

It is acknowledged that Bourdieu is not always transparent in his writing and indeed sometimes his prose can seem deliberately impenetrable and as such the choice of relevant concepts has been carefully selected and tested to ensure applicability to my thesis context. In particular there has been an extensive discussion concerning cultural capital in the context of international students in higher education, as this concept is not clearly defined by Bourdieu.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital is particularly relevant to the study of international student experiences as it would suggest that international students are automatically disadvantaged in the UK higher education field. They are unlikely to have an understanding of the UK higher education system and may, as in the case of some of my participants, have been brought up in homes with variable levels of cultural capital. The following quote from Bourdieu proposes that such individuals may be less liable to succeed and this proposition will be explored in my research:

"… the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture", (Bourdieu 1977: 494).

This quotation is an apt example of how experiences may be different in different countries at different times. Written in the 1970s in France this may have been an entirely accurate description of the education system in that country at that time. Writing now in 2015, in a multicultural United Kingdom where government policy has actively encouraged engagement with higher education, this homogenous perspective is less likely to be applicable. Those involved in higher education now have a much more diverse enrolment in terms of country of origin, previous qualifications and experience, age, first language etc. than Bourdieu is likely to have experienced in France in 1977.

A concept related to the possession of such diversity of cultural capital, which is used to describe the impact of consolidating rather than expanding cultural capital, is that of the sojourner, as originally defined by Siu in 1952. This term was used to refer to Chinese migrants who spent the majority of their lifetime in the host society, often working in low paid, low status jobs. Woon (1983) further researched these individuals and found that many Chinese migrants clung to their own culture and thus resisted assimilation. For example the sojourners lived, worked and socialised in ghettos, often referred to as Chinatown, outside the dominant social system. This resulted in a restricted life with limited contact with members of the host society. The

maintenance of frequent communication with the home community was of critical importance to emphasise the advancement of the sojourner which in turn was identified with the advancement of their extended family and community.

The work of Coates (2004) has developed the theme of sojourner using it to refer to some international students described as short term visitors to a new culture. Earlier research by McLemore (1970) provided a different perspective that suggested sojourners, such as international students, do not become assimilated but create new ways of living that are neither characteristic of life at home, nor of the dominant cultural group. This is reinforced in more recent research by Crozet et al (1999:1) which identified what they termed the third place as: "… *the unbounded point of intersection where interactants from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds meet and communicate successfully*".   This hybrid approach is not always reflected in the research findings, with Coates in 2004 and Jenkins in 2008 identifying national enclaves which can positively discourage integration with other nationalities.

3.3   Social capital

Unlike the concept of cultural capital, which is attributed largely to Bourdieu, when considering the term social capital, the contribution of other researchers has added to its theoretical development. Although Bourdieu considered social capital as one of the key capitals structuring the social world, he did not develop his theory of social capital to the same extent as he did cultural capital. In particular I would consider the approaches to social capital in particular of Putnam (1995 and 2000) to also be relevant when considering the international student experience. Putnam developed the idea of social capital by contrasting bonding and bridging capital which is relevant to those individuals, such as international students, who find themselves in new situations, where they are deprived of their former social networks.

According to Bourdieu, the origins of social capital reside in the realms of conflict and power, as actors engaged in a struggle over their interests (Schwartz 1997). This means that individuals who are limited in their social capital, lack the resources to: *"… extract the full benefit from their qualifications",* (Bourdieu 1979:147). Through social relations, an individual and groups may acquire the ability to advance their interests. A central proposition of the social capital theory is that:

"… networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, providing their members with the collectively owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word", (Bourdieu 1986:249).

There is a substantial body of literature concerning social capital which reflects ambiguities around what the term actually means in different contexts. There is debate for instance about how it can be measured and how it can be increased (Putnam 2000; Devine and Roberts 2003). Devine and Roberts (2003) consider that it is extremely difficult to reach a consensus about the definition of social capital. Woolcock (1998) stresses the importance of concentrating on the sources of social

capital, which is the nature of social relationships, rather than the outcomes of social capital, tying in with the approach of this thesis. Woolcock attempted to draw together the main features from the various fields of sociology, politics and economics into a helpful overarching definition of social capital which I feel best fits my research: *"… encompassing the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit"* (Woolcock 1998:155).

Putnam is seen by many as a leading social capital theorist but he has concentrated on the presence or absence of social capital at a macro level, using US data to claim that social capital, referring to a stock of social capital in one specific context, is in decline. His social capital approach focused on enabling community development through the indirect benefits of membership of civic, leisure and religious organisations and as such his research is of limited direct relevance to the individual international student experience. However, one aspect which is applicable to the international student experience, is his stress on the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). The bonding form of social capital is based on exclusive ties of solidarity between *"people like us",* exemplified by families and in the context of this thesis those international students who share cultural values. Putnam considers this to be an effective approach in increasing solidarity and supporting the development of strong ties based on loyalty to the group. This form of social capital is inward looking, reinforcing identities and promoting homogeneity but is not always positive as it tends to be exclusive by its very nature. This description accurately describes the behaviour of my participants who are members of the Peking cohort.

By contrast, the bridging form of social capital refers to co-operative connections with people from different walks of life and so may be used with reference to the relationships between international students from different cultural backgrounds. Bridging social capital reinforces inclusive identities and is beneficial for a healthy but diverse society but Putnam et al (2003) acknowledge that it can be difficult to create. The bonding form of social capital can be derived from social control and is typically found in what Portes (1998:10) calls *"rule enforcement", "bounded solidarity"* and "*enforceable trust".* The differences in these approaches was highlighted in Granovetter's 1973 research where he describes bonding as tending to result in strong ties and encouraging individuals to form relationships with others similar to themselves. He goes onto propose that weak ties from developing bridging social capital are valuable to the development of relationships with individuals outside the usual social sphere and so can enhance the opportunities for integration into new communities. This conceptual distinction should be seen as a continuum since in reality many groups serve both bridging and bonding functions.

International students arrive in their host country generally denuded of social capital and they are often confronted by unfamiliar cultural and educational institutions. This means international students are likely to engage in behaviour to facilitate the reconstitution of their social capital which may include the development of bonding and bridging social capital. They may bond with students of the same ethnic group, shared language or faith for example.   They may also seek to build bridging social

capital by forming relationships within international students from different cultures, the local community through voluntary work or in an employment environment. Social networking, including the development of bridging and bonding capital, was explored with my participants in order to assess the role of social capital in the international student experience.

The importance of developing social networks has been emphasised in the previous chapter and this links to another, more strategic and career-focused definition of social capital. It is the development of relationships with key individuals, who may have a positive influence on one's current or future opportunities. Such relationships are likely to be established, strong and consistent in the country of origin, especially with family members but these need to be reconstructed in the new environment as part of the transition process. Giddens (2000:78) wrote of this as follows:

"The cultivation of social capital is integral to the knowledge economy. The "new individualism" that goes along with globalisation is not refractory to cooperation and collaboration – cooperation is positively stimulated by it. Social capital refers to trust networks that individuals can draw upon for social support, just like financial capital can be drawn on for investment. Like financial capital, social capital can be expanded – invested and reinvested".

In this framework social capital is seen as the context within which a sense of belonging is created and that leads to another function of social capital which is that it helps to build identity (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Orlikowski 2002). Furthermore, the function of identity formation is intertwined with the function of normative control. If members invest in their social capital and behave in similar ways by displaying similar behavioural norms such as in the case of international students, eating together and working late, then the identification with that social unit is strengthened. This is a key aspect of Confucian culture where conformity is valued and this was explored in my research. Interestingly, Swart (2006) suggested that in these instances, members of the particular network are more likely to trust their counterparts and provide more resources without expecting a reciprocal arrangement. This behaviour is defined as a degree of resilient trust (Leana and van Buren 1999).

The implication of this view of social capital is that it is better to have close-knit relationships within a network as this structural form is believed to produce higher societal returns on relational investments. This is as a result of the shared identity that facilitates mutual coordination and associability, as well as the subordination of individual goals to the goals of the collective (Leana and van Buren 1999). Whilst this perspective can reinforce positive behaviour such as valuing academic success, it also suggests that failure to comply, for example by academic failure, can result in shame and loss of face which can have significant cultural and social implications (Nguyen 2005). This view again is consistent with elements of Confucian doctrine which focuses on the greater good and the importance of harmony and consensus. Again, this accurately describes the behaviour of my participants who belong to the Peking cohort.

In the context of the international student experience, these relationships may not necessarily be of a temporary nature, as Baruch et al (2005:53) commented:

"The cohort of a specific class, the full alumni of the university, and the overall population of graduates serve as a foundation stone for networking. Being part of the "old boys" network is a great asset for individual members, and organisational networks can increase human capital contribution to organisational success".

Social media such as Facebook can be employed to facilitate the maintenance of these networks when students return to their country of origin as this extends the lifespan of the social network beyond face to face communication. At the same time lack of access to such social media, as is the case for Chinese students, as Facebook is not currently available in China due to government censorship, may negatively impact on post-graduation communication (Matthew 2014).

Social capital also refers to the resources that accrue to individuals and groups as a result of their social network (Taylor et al 2004). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:119) define this as:

"… the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition".

The core idea of social capital is that social networks have value through, for example, shared norms, trust and reciprocity which, in turn, fosters cooperation to support the achievement of common goals (Ituma et al 2007). Ong and Ward's 2005 research with Singaporean students found that these students considered that their ties with other overseas students were deeper and more meaningful than those with host nationals. The latter were considered helpful in relation to instrumental and information needs, while fellow overseas students were relied on for emotional support. These findings were compared to the social network experiences of my participants.

Jenkins' study of Chinese managers on a UK MBA, found that these students were not concerned with building social networks based on friendships, but rather they were networking with a view to considering how relationships with co-nationals might be of benefit on their return to their workplace in China, as illustrated by this comment:

"I think we can find benefit from that (relationships with co-nationals*) at the moment … it will produce good effect in the future … Chinese people cannot separate work and friendship and they are closely linked"*, (2008:9).

This is an interesting approach to social capital and one which was explored with my participants.

Bochner, McLeod and Lin's 1977 classic model of intercultural friendship suggests that international students operate within three networks of relationships, each of which serves a particular function. The first is a primary co-national network whose function is to affirm cultural identity and psychological and emotional support. A secondary network of host nationals facilitates professional and academic aspirations and there is a third multicultural network whose function is largely recreational. This study found that host nationals were relied upon largely for language and academic assistance. International students in Canada, Australia, the UK, the US and Japan have been found to prefer locals for seeking language help and solving academic problems (Westwood and Barker 1990). It is apparent that different networks are used for difference functions but as studies from the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore indicate, the host national network is as salient as the co-national one, particularly for emotional support (Klineberg 1982; Wiseman 1997; Nowak and Weiland 1998; Ito 2004; Ong and Ward 2005). This theory was tested in the context of my participants.

If an international student is from an ethnic minority that has a large representation on campus and a strong subculture, they are very likely to feel drawn to membership of that group (Kim 1991). As a result of engaging with such a group, active participation in the host culture's communication activities may be discouraged and limited and the international student may be perceived by host nationals and other students as anti-social for speaking their native language and socialising with members of their own cultural group. As my participants come from a mix of cultures, some more prevalent on campus than others, I have had an opportunity to explore this hypothesis.

Many authors have noted the formation of enclaves of international students on campus. For example Klineberg in 1982 and Church, also in 1982, concluded that social isolation from host nationals was a way of life for Far Eastern students in the US. It has been suggested that enclaves function to reduce anxiety, feelings of powerlessness and social stresses. They enable traditional value and belief systems to be maintained and thus reduce the need for psychological and behavioural adjustment (Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963; Church 1982). The participants in my study include four students from a Chinese provincial government, referred to as the Peking cohort, which provides an ideal opportunity to explore the enclave concept.

3.4 Identity capital

Identity, described by Moorcroft (1997) as allowing focus on the person within, understanding who and what they are, is a highly contested area theoretically. Although this thesis does not seek to focus on identity, it is a feature of the international student experience and an aspect of social capital and as such it is relevant to consider how it can be defined and understood in an international student context. Subjectivity describes the sense of self, the unconscious, sometimes irrational, emotional perspective. It is with this aspect of identity that we react to the world around us, and the environments in which we immerse ourselves. This makes

the concept particularly relevant to international students in making sense of their foreign university setting. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) provided a useful discussion on the diverse range of meanings given to the term identity. However, in the context of my research, I am using the term identity to refer to the product of multiple and competing discourses, where the term identity is used to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating and fragmented nature of the contemporary "self".

Coleman (1980) divided core texts on identity, emphasising the influence of both psychoanalytic (Freud 1901; Blos 1962) and sociological influences (Erikson 1965) on the process. Conflicts in relation to socially acceptable behaviour such as identity versus role confusion, often focus on the transitional phase of adolescence but such conflicts can emerge when the adult is moved from their familiar surroundings and faces new challenges at any age (Erikson 1965). This concept is relevant to my study as international students have to redefine themselves and the foreign environment in which they live and study, as do immigrants.

Furthermore, writers such as Barbarin and Jean-Baptiste (2013) have defined sociocultural identity as that which evolves naturally through an individual's upbringing and includes such factors as socioeconomic class, ethnic identity and international students see themselves in the world and what societal and cultural expectations are in terms of being "good" and "successful". I will explore this with my three female participants to consider whether the gendered aspect of their identity has been affected by their international experience.

Eze (2011:306) wrote about the immigrant experience of identity in the context of South Africa where he claimed that:

" … to gain acceptance and recognition, the immigrant continuously navigates his or her identity to fit precariously into society… the immigrant's identity is continuously rehearsed as a performance, an art for social acceptance … the immigrant masks his actual identity as a foil for recognition and acceptance".

Writing in 2006, Cote offered a different perspective where he supported the contention that identity theory is essential in understanding the adjustments made by immigrants as part of the acculturation process. He suggested a more balanced approach where: *"… the acculturation process is … an individual one, with each new member both adopting new beliefs and values from the receiving culture and retaining beliefs and values from the country of origin"* (Cote 2006:32). Cote and Schwarz (2002) further defined this as an individualisation process, where individuals attempt to compensate for a lack of collective support from their established social networks and culture. Cote (2005) suggested that those who have insufficient identity capital or social capital are more likely to experience identity problems associated with alienation and marginalisation.

As international students can be considered to be temporary migrants, thus Cote (2006) offers an interesting and relevant hypothesis that international students may have to in some way supress aspects of their identity, while behaving in a manner

80

which will facilitate their integration into the new environment, so concurring with Eze (2011). Given cultural differences such demands could be challenging for some international students, particularly those from cultures which differ significantly to the UK and this was explored with my participants.

The theory of identity capital was introduced by Cote in 1996 and draws on Erikson's (1965) hypothesis that a coherent sense of identity is best facilitated when the individual engages in purposeful interactions with the social environment. Erikson proposed that people handle individualisation tasks better if they have a variety of tangible skills such as language and intangible resources such as cognitive skills. These resources help find acceptance and membership of new social groups and thus there is potential for individuals to enjoy the rewards that membership of these groups might bring. Although much of Cote's research focused on the experience of adolescents moving into adulthood, there are many similarities with international students seeking to establish themselves in their new communities and as such both groups of individuals are experiencing a potentially transformative and transitional life phase, hence the relevance of Cote's work to international students.

The shift towards globalisation, as discussed in the previous chapter, has been facilitated by factors such as mass communication, migration, tourism and commuting. The global market is affecting the way individuals feel about themselves, their sense of home and their cultural identities (Berger 1984 in Rapport and Dawson 1998). Many have become adept at moving and are more "at home" in movement and so identity is less linked to a home which is located in a community in a fixed geographical space. *"For a world of travellers … home comes to be found far more usually in a routine set of practices, in a repetition of habitual social interactions, in the ritual of a regularly used personal name", (*Rapport and Dawson 1998:27).

Writing about the international mobility of academics, Kim in 2010, added to the development of the identity capital theory by referring to the transnational identity capital of such individuals. Kim (2010:584) defined this as a set of generic competences, which when combined, allowed individuals to effectively engage with otherness:

"… the concept of otherness here is taken as the quality that someone or something has, which is different from himself/herself or from the things that he/she has experienced. It is a mode of cosmopolitan positioning to forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations, which can facilitate free movement among diverse groups and contexts, including ethno-national sub-cultures".

International students may be seen to be part of the shift towards cultural globalisation in the way they sojourn in another place (Bradley 2000). Those who adapt more quickly and more readily may be the ones who are most able to carry their worlds with them in their known set of behaviours and perceptions of self (Bradley 1997). Conversely, international students who are the least disconnected from the physical sense of home may be more likely to experience culture shock and require more support with cultural adjustment. This explanation may provide an

insight into the link between the complex question of culture, identity and both positive and negative reactions to changing locations and these concepts were explored in this study.

There are clear challenges to the suggestion that international students, like any other group artificially labelled together by a common demographic factor, are, in fact, a homogeneous group. To investigate them as a separate group, assumes that there are more similar, shared experiences for them than there are differences between them. Consideration needs to be given as to how individuals in such a group come to define themselves and how these same individuals redefine or reform their identity when plunged into a new environment with different expectations and sometimes unfamiliar or unknown rules of behaviour.

3.4.1 Communication technology and identity

Before the mid-1990s, international students' communication with family and friends in their country of origin was largely limited to occasional, expensive phone calls and post. As the telecommunications market has expanded and competition has increased, the cost of phone calls from both land lines and mobiles has decreased significantly and thus widened access considerably. The ubiquitous nature of high speed broadband and lower PC and laptop prices as well as the significant increase in mobile computing devices, has increased the speed and reduced the cost of email communication. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Skype and Face Time communications, involving both audio and video, are increasingly used regularly by international students as a means of maintaining communications.

These developments have affected the backdrop against which identity is maintained, deconstructed and reconstructed. Such technologies enable new communication formats, offering new modes of selecting, organising and presenting information (Altheide 1995). In turn, these new formats reshape social activity in that they can modify or dismantle current practices and spur or shape new ones. This means that these technologies can create new environments for self-development and identification, presenting new opportunities for collective affiliation and mobilisation (Cerulo 1997).

Communications were explored with my participants but my anecdotal evidence from international students suggests that some engage in communication which is selective in content, dependent on the recipient. So a student may have two separate Facebook sites with one which is accessible to family and another for their friends, with different text and photographic content. The former will focus on study, progress and selected cultural experiences while the latter is likely to be more based on former and current social systems and developments therein. The constant contact with former social and community networks seems likely to be a facilitating factor when the student returns home as the communications have been maintained whilst the student has been overseas. Furthermore, the development of a Facebook site for those friends at the overseas university, also ensures that contact is maintained with

those who have shared the student's international experiences; thus supporting the technology enabled continuation of a collective identity.

3.4.2 Cultural identity

Cultural identity is believed to be an important factor impacting on how individuals adapt interculturally. Underlying much of the early research on intercultural adaptation was the assumption that individuals were leaving and unlearning one culture with the goal of assimilating into a second culture. The implication here is that the native cultural identity would thus be replaced with a newly acquired one (LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton 1993; Kim 2008). Later research by Berry in 2008, has proposed that cultural adaptation is a more two-dimensional process in which the individual undergoes two independent processes of acculturation, or culture learning: one to the culture of origin and one to the host culture. This simultaneous behaviour echoes the research findings of Bennett in 1993 who considered how individuals engaged in the integration process in terms of constantly defining their own identity and evaluating their behaviour and values in contrast to and in concert with multiple cultures. This results in the incorporation of aspects of other cultures with their home culture perspectives. The notion that it is possible for an individual to function simultaneously in two different cultures and alter behaviour to fit a particular cultural context is also articulated in La Fromboise et al's 1993 model of cultural adaptation which assumes that it is possible for an individual to have a sense of belonging in two cultures without compromising their sense of cultural identity.

International students experience two periods of transition: the first when they move to another country to undertake their studies and a second when they return to their country of origin. Many studies on international students focus more on their assimilation experiences than on the social contexts to which these students are exposed (Hsieh 2006). These studies have led to the assumption that international students' identities are constructed only within the individual because of their high aspirations to personal growth. Hsieh's findings suggest that identities are affected by experiences and interactions and so this challenges the conceptual approach that defines identity as something that develops naturally.

In this discourse, identity is understood as fragmented, incomplete, constituted by identification with multiple social groupings, communities, sets of values, interests and beliefs that interact with a wide range of practices (Peeler 2002), and the notion of migrants being rooted in a univocal, monolithic culture is questioned (Bhatia and Ram 2001). The reconstruction of identity in a host country has recently been framed as an interactive process, which allows migrants to evolve without fully forsaking their cultural heritage. Letting go of an idea of cultural purity, the migrant assumes a hybrid identity or double vision, an ability to both call on different perspectives and to integrate these in new ways according to different situations (Lewis 2005).

3.4.3 Collective and national identity

What I am interested in exploring here is the literature relating to the extent to which students arrive with a sense of national identity, linked to their experiences and culture in their country of origin and how they may develop transitional identities. There is the potential here for conflict, where international students feel loyalty to their national identity but at the same time some empathy and a need to be accepted by the culture which they are visiting. The resultant phenomena may be some sort of transitional identity where there is obvious potential for tension, confusion and conflict. When international students return to their country of origin, there is a further sense of transition and again potential for conflict as their identity is redefined. As well as self-identity, I am interested in exploring how identity is viewed by others, with reference to for example national or ethnic stereotyping.

In some cases this might be the first point at which the individual has consciously thought of the notion of "self": the way that they are, how they behave, what they believe in, how they present themselves and how others see them. Marcia (1966 and 1980) has added to Erikson's work by describing some states that adults can enter into when reforming an identity. Of particular interest is what Marcia describes as "identity diffusion" in which the international student may be unclear about their identity, aims or role in their new environment. The decision to study at a foreign university is a deliberate decision of life-changing proportions by definition and thus will influence an identity-changing or at least affecting process.   The spectrum of potential views as to the impact of the experience on identity will be explored in this study.

Bourdieu's relational concepts of the field and habitus contextualise the notion of emotional capital as sets of emotions or feelings which are not only shared by groups of individuals implicated in social structures and processes, but which are significant in the formation and maintenance of political and social identities and collective behaviour (Barbalet 1998). Thus collective identity is what enables individuals to feel themselves part of a community as opposed to others that are considered to be outsiders (Melucci 1996). The concept of insider/outsider is one which affects in particular those international students from cultures which differ significantly from that which is visited for study and this concept will be explored with participants.

Emotional capital is relevant when considering national identity as it includes emotional patterns which differentiate social groups by virtue of the fact that they are shared by their members and are unlikely to be shared with non-members (Barbalet 1998). This emotional capital may be understood as involving emotional practices that are inextricably linked to the ways individuals and groups form their habitus and perceive themselves and others. The implications from the circulation of emotional capital may be seen in the ways that various events including ethnic celebrations such as Chinese Spring Festival; national mourning days, religious events such as Ramadan and so on, connect an individual to their larger group. These shared events can result in a profound sense of belonging and constitute a source of

collective action, where individual identity is affirmed and subsumed to the group (Petonito 2000).

In addition to the forms of capital discussed earlier, writers such as Bochner, McLeod and Lin in 1977, make reference to national capital, where individuals from a particular geographic location may feel the need to conform to and reference national stereotypes. For example, Chinese students are often described as quiet, hardworking and numerate. Odenyo (1971 cited in Church 1982) found that the personal status and self-esteem of international students was strongly influenced by the perceived status accorded to the home country by the host. Lambert and Bressler (1956 cited in Church 1982) referred to a looking glass in which sojourners form their attitudes to their host country based on their perceptions and attitudes to their own culture (Bochner and Perks 1971 cited in Bochner, McLeod and Lin 1977) support this. They found that overseas students are under considerable pressure from both host and co-nationals to maintain and rehearse their national identity. Such behaviour may inhibit adaptation and encourage the formation of the aforementioned enclaves with individuals from the same geographic region. This is also sometimes referred to as heritage cultural identity, where identification with one's culture of origin is often assumed to be maintained rather than transformed when studying in a foreign country (Kashima and Loh 2006). The concept of national identity and what it means for international students will be a theme in this study.

This discussion of the theoretical literature has considered the concept of social and identity capital, which is used as a theoretical underpinning within the thesis alongside cultural capital. Together these concepts offer a framework for the exploration of a range of cultural, social and identity related issues in the context of the international student experience. While Bourdieu has been identified as the key theorist in this area, the work of Baruch et al (2005) has been noted and so this chapter will go on to consider the additional three forms of capital highlighted in their research, starting with inner value capital.

3.5   Inner-value, market value and intellectual capital

Inner-value capital refers to the competencies gained through a high sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence (Boyatzis and Renio 1989; Baruch and Peiperl 2000). Improving these internal competencies is expected to produce tangible and intangible positive outcomes. Although the issue of confidence did not arise as part of the literature review, it was a significant theme within my research findings, where the majority of participants considered that their confidence had increased considerably as a result of their international experience. Hence inner-value capital is worthy of exploration and discussion as this is a form of capital liable to change as a result of the international student experience.

Research has shown that some international students anticipate that a UK degree will have a transformative affect in the sense of endowing them with confidence and thus respect and in some cases envy, within their social networks in their country of origin.

This is illustrated by Jenkins (2008:16) in his research with Chinese managers undertaking an MBA in the UK, as illustrated by this participant:

"… I think that the people working with me show respect to me because I graduated from the most famous UK university (in fact at the time of the research a mid-ranking institution) *… so basically I was accepted in my working unit, in my working circle".*

And from another participant in the same study:

"… I didn't get promotion but I think I can make some decisions by myself, more than I could before I go abroad… I think the foreign learning experience is more, kind of helped me to make easier to communicate with other country people. It opens your eyes, opens your ears, gives you different points of view".

Broadening horizons and developing new thinking styles were the two key elements identified by Jenkins' Chinese participants:

"… going out of the country (China), *developing a more global perspective, understanding the western cultures and changing the way of thinking is more important than knowledge of management".*

It is acknowledged that this is a challenging area in which to undertake primary research with international students. Consideration needs to be given as to whether those students with lower levels of English proficiency may be less able to articulate inner-value capital but nonetheless consideration of changes in inner-value capital will be explored with my participants.

Bourdieu tended to refer to economic capital in terms of its ability to transubstantiate into other forms of capital and in particular social capital (1986). Baruch, Bell and Gray (2005) applied the concept of economic capital to the context of higher education and linked the result of investing in education to the enhancement of market-value capital. This was used to refer to the extent to which the predicted earning potential of a graduate is augmented by holding a specific qualification, sometimes from a particular country or even institution. For example, research has shown that graduates of MBA programmes in the leading US business schools have the potential to improve their income considerably (Hegarty 1996; Schofield 1996; Business Week 2002). Research by Baruch and Peiperl in 2000 found that an MBA can help to improve income for both graduates from the top business schools as well as for those from institutions which are considered to be less prestigious and thus both the institution and the award can be considered to be recognised brands. The MBA brand provides an illustration of the globalisation of higher education where a common understanding of what is involved in the completion of an MBA is shared across continents.

There is often a function of investment in higher education with a view to increasing the value of an individual student to their family and /or an employer organisation, on

completion of their studies. Lockett (1988) argued that the Chinese attached more importance to the attainment of a certain position, recognised by others, than westerners. This is illustrated in Jenkins' (2008:12) study of Chinese managers, where it was found that students had been selected to enrol on the UK programme, based on the perceived added value they would return with: *"… my leader … he thinks if I go to the UK I can learn some knowledge and if I come back I will have a good opportunity to be promoted".* Attempts have been made to categorise this added value with Mintzberg (2004) for example estimating that there is a 38% return to the individual, in terms of the initial outlay for an MBA in the US. For the most part, one would expect an increase in income which might then be attributed to the extra productivity that individuals might claim in the labour market, having newly gained skills and competencies from their MBA (Baruch and Leeming 2001). MBA degrees are widely available in business and management schools around the world and are perceived by many to be precursors to a successful career in management (Cameron 1997; Hilgert 1998).

In those cultures where parents are actively involved in their children's marriage choices, there is very clear evidence in the match-making advertisements placed by parents that their children's education is seen as a key selection criteria and the desired educational attainment of their child's prospective spouse is also of concern. I am familiar with newspapers in countries such as India and Sri Lanka where extensive coverage is given to such advertisements and the importance of a qualification awarded overseas is given prominence. These advertisements could be interpreted as evidence that parents consider that as they have invested in their child's education overseas, the prospective spouse should have an educational level which is comparable or exceeds that of their child. It has to be remembered that in many of these societies it is expected that children will be directly responsible for the care of their parents within the family home. This tradition suggests that parents have invested in their children's education, inter alia, in order to help them secure what they consider to be a progressive career and sustainable income, from which they as parents will ultimately benefit and hence the successful completion of the MBA can be said to contribute to the student's market value which is likely to result in increased economic capital for themselves and their families.

Monk and Whittaker (2008) wrote that this approach to investment is consistent with neoclassical economics. In that paradigm, rational individuals would be expected to determine the financial costs and predicted benefits of an overseas qualification. Such an approach assumes that if choosing to study overseas yielded the potential for significant extra earnings, then individuals would, given the choice and resources, naturally elect to enrol on the overseas course. In the context of my study, it was found that such a decision is not necessarily taken by the individual student alone but will often involve a wider discussion with other stakeholders. The extent to which market value capital is considered by my participants and their stakeholders is therefore an appropriate concept for investigation.

The term intellectual capital was first introduced by Kenneth Galbraith in 1969. He believed that intellectual capital was more than pure intellect but included what he defined as intellectual action, which is not just having knowledge but also the skills to use that knowledge (Bontis 1998). A more capital based approach was taken by Skaikh in 2004, where intellectual capital was defined as knowledge that can be converted into value or intellectual material, such as knowledge, information, intellectual property and experience, which can then in turn be used in wealth creation. It would therefore be reasonable to consider that educational systems provide the mechanisms and constitute primary sites for the accumulation and legitimation of cultural resources, as well as for the institutionalisation of cultural capital via degrees (Symeou 2007).

In the context of my research, intellectual capital is used to refer to the knowledge that graduates obtain from their studies in the form of theoretical knowledge which is distinct from experiential knowledge, often developed from employment. It is therefore to be expected that at the beginning of a period of international study there will be some expectations concerning the acquisition of knowledge to come. For some international students there may be a self-perception of inferiority, of lacking in an understanding of contemporary issues, in particular amongst some students from developing economies. This is illustrated by this quote from Jenkins' study of Chinese middle managers studying for an MBA in the UK (2008:2): *"I really want to know the differences between Chinese and western management – why are they* (western) *so advanced?"*

In the same study by Jenkins (2008:5) he identified that the development of teamwork skills was valued by the participants: "*I really know that the most valuable experience that I gained in the residential was the team work, it means that if you want to reach your goal, it is not on your own*". There is some evidence that students returning from the UK to work in China are under pressure by their employers to demonstrate those skills acquired while overseas. This is illustrated by a 2006 article from the English language Chinese newspaper, China Daily, written by Zhe, which commented that such individuals should be regarded as the nation's *"great treasure"* because they are expected to have a more *"global outlook"*.

Studies, such as that of Sheridan in 2010, have identified a gap between academic expectations and international students' varied capabilities. Sheridan noted that universities have tended to take an assimilationist perspective to student diversity and so students are expected to fit into an institution's existing practices (Zepke and Leach 2005). This helps to explain the academic transition shock referred to in the previous chapter. For example some international students may experience this when asked to engage with activities such as group presentations and assessments, which may not have been encountered before. There is however critical discourse regarding such an institutional stance which considers that diversity should be evident in award content and teaching methods, as any student arrives into a HEI with specific cultural capital. My research investigated students' expectations and experiences concerning the acquisition of intellectual capital.

Different forms of capital interact in different ways, diversely affecting social positions and so individuals have packages of capital rather than having or not having a certain type (Silva and Edwards 2003). These processes work in different directions and they are continuously transferred, as well as being transformed This makes these different forms of capital particularly relevant to international students who are moving between different cultures and countries and thus reflecting different values as they experience this transition. Capital should not be considered simply in terms of accumulation or investment processes because power and control are conferred and legitimised through particular possessions of capital.

This chapter has demonstrated that the theoretical concepts of social and cultural capital have the potential to provide an appropriate framework for this study. In combination with an understanding of identity, inner-value, market value and intellectual capital, they offer sufficient scope to explore the range of social and cultural issues affecting the international student experience. These include the role of habitus, the influence of family, cultural intelligence, as well as the development of social networks and the ways in which these are connected.

This conceptual framework, along with an understanding of the relevant policy and the literature concerned with international students has helped to focus this study and this is reflected in the research questions. It was necessary to complete the literature review chapter and this theoretical chapter before research questions could be defined as they have drawn on the interplay between policy, experience, capital and identity.

The overarching research aim which guides this research is therefore:

"How do international students understand their experience in the UK?"

This can be broken down into the following research aims:

1. *To identify the factors which contribute to different experiences*

2. *To critically analyse the most significant challenges involved in this transition process, using a capital framework*

3. *To explore how these international students understand their identity in a foreign learning environment*

The following table shows how the overarching research aim to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of international students was sub-divided into three sub-aims and associated questions:

Table 3.1: My research aims and research questions

The overarching research aim was to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of international students and this was sub-divided into three sub-aims and associated questions:

Research aims:	Research questions:
To identify the factors which contribute to different experiences	In what ways do international students report being influenced by factors such as family and previous academic experiences inter alia? How do international students report negotiating language challenges?
To critically analyse the most significant challenges involved in this transition process, using a capital framework	What is the relationship between various forms of identified capital and the international student experience?
To explore how these international students understand their identity in a foreign learning environment	How do international students understand their identity has been and will be affected by their international experience?

The research aims draw on the literature review findings which focus on the international student experience in terms of loss and acquisition and Bourdieu's capital theory can be used to help explain these experiences. The first research aim is drawn from the literature review which considered a wide range of international student studies and thus helped to identify the key factors affecting the international student experience. Extensive research has been undertaken into the impact of language competency and as this was raised as a cause for concern by a number of my participants, I considered that it was a substantial affecting factor and should therefore be discussed separately. Research aim two seeks to apply Bourdieu's capital theory to my participants' experiences and the final research aim seeks to explore how international students understand their identity may be affected both during their experience and on their return to their country of origin.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Methodological considerations

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological approach. As a researcher, I wanted to understand the lived international student experience through a collection of interviews. When evaluating the experiences of individuals, which can change from day to day, there can be no hard facts, only individuals' perceptions at a given point. I also come from a perspective where I believe that individuals, while undoubtedly having varied cultural influences, are subject to influence by the interaction of the world around them and respond accordingly by creating their own "truths". Such a view grounds this study in an ethnographic tradition which is more concerned with description than prediction but at the same time this is not a full scale ethnographic study and this interpretation will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

As my aim was to better understand the lived experiences of international students it was necessary to conduct a qualitative study which asked how and why certain opinions had been formed (Schwandt 1997). This approach recognised the methodological challenge in studying international students as they are not homogeneous and there are also inevitably individual differences amongst those originating from any single country.

The focus of the study was deliberately restricted to a case study of one UK higher education institution in order to collate deep data. This contrasts with much of the previously discussed research undertaken with international students, which has tended to be based on large scale student samples, adopting a more quantitative approach. Presenting these international students' voices vividly, in line with ethnographic principles, my intention is to connect their experiences not only with their family, educational and social backgrounds in the context of the increasing globalisation of higher education but also to consider how these international students negotiate different forms of capital during their experience in the UK.

The research questions are a refined version which reflects: *"… the dialogue between theory and evidence"* (Pendry 1994:38). Both the focus of the research questions and the thematic nature of the interviews were informed by an on-going reading of the literature. This process reflects an inductive/deductive approach. I began this research by taking an inductive approach, whereby the participant interviews were held before a detailed literature review had been completed and thus I was initially using my interpretation of these interviews to build a picture of the international student experience. The on-going work on my literature review and theoretical framework then led me back to considering how theoretical sensitivity could help me to make sense of my findings and this could be described as a deductive approach.

The process of selecting an appropriate methodology consisted of a long process of eliminating the inappropriate and those mismatched with my ontological beliefs until I was left with an obvious choice.

Key decision making factors included:

- this is a study of international students and as such the methodology has to take into consideration the complexities of studying influences, perception and meaning in the lives of students from very different cultural backgrounds and with variable levels of English language proficiency, this is the phenomenon being studied

- this study was endeavouring to explain and understand the experiences that international students interacted with, not simply describe them

- the complexities suggested the recording of perceptions at two different time periods in an attempt to offer additional layers of insight

The next section explains my broadly ethnographic approach to sampling, data collection and analysis.

4.2   An ethnographically informed approach

While this research was not 'ethnographic' in the sense of seeking to capture a particular culture, it was informed and influenced by an understanding of ethnographic principles in terms of for example a commitment to cultural interpretation (Punch 2009).

My research is ethnographically informed in the sense that it is sensitive to the experiences of a particular group of individuals; it was an unfolding and evolving sort of study, rather than prestructured and I endeavoured to be sensitive to the meanings of behaviour, actions, events and contexts, as described by my participants. My research can be defined as a diachronic study in that the participants' experiences were monitored at two different points, over time to facilitate the exploration of changes and developments (Cohen et al 2007). A full scale ethnography would mean carrying out a detailed and demanding study with field work and data collection running over an extended period of time which would have been an interesting approach but it would have been inappropriate for this study as my participants' registration at Midlands University was for a maximum of twelve months and so face to face access was limited to this timeframe.

The aim of my research was not to describe a culture, which would be consistent with ethnographic research, but rather to better understand individual international students' lived experiences. The decision to use interviews to gather data was influenced by Seidman (1991:8), who noted, in relation to ethnographic work: *"At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other*

people and the meaning they make of that experience". In my research the experience is the process of transition from the international students' home environments to the new environment at Midlands University which facilitates the exploration of their different perceptions and experiences. Using interviews allowed my participants to express themselves in their own words and through their own stories to remain at the centre of the research process, as interpretations were derived from their descriptions and stories.

Interviews were also chosen to facilitate both structure and flexibility (Legard et al 2003). Falling within the ethnographic research model, the interview is seen as a conversation in which the researcher asks questions to enable the interviewees to tell their own stories on their own terms. In a similar vein, the case study approach is compatible with the interpretative frameworks that have informed the theoretical basis of this study (Kvale 1996). Within a context of limitations, structural and perceptual, it is this environment of international students studying in one university in the UK that provides the field of investigation.

By studying the participant's reality, as reflected in their application of language and experiences under investigation, automatically implies meanings, social relations and values which are independent of the researcher. This therefore assumes a distinction between meaning (what the participants actually mean) and the interpretation of this meaning by the researcher, that is to say, the claim that an accurate depiction of this meaning has been achieved. Interpreting the participants' world and their way of making sense of their new environment is taken to represent a more accurate reflection of the reality of experiences and perceptions for those participants. My interpretation is based on my experiences and the emerging theoretical framework. My responsibility is to make sense of the data, using the coding process detailed later in this chapter, in order to identify patterns and reflect knowledge.

Validity is a multidimensional concept which is dependent on the nature of the research being undertaken as well as the participants' contribution. The complexity inherent in the concept of validity means that it inevitably overlaps with concerns regarding reliability and ethical implications. A study can be described as internally valid if it describes the true state of affairs within its own setting and in the context of my study, internal validity has been sought by asking participants to check the accuracy of their interview transcripts. This is consistent with Hammersley's view that: *"… an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe"* (1987:69).

In the context of my research, validity is defined as producing findings which are true to the aims of the research as well as the participants' interviews and which are relevant to the development of an understanding of the lived experiences of international postgraduate business students. This approach reflects Black and Champion's definition of validity: *"… the measure that an instrument measures what it is supposed to"* (1976:232). My research is less concerned with the concept of

reliability in so far as the data collected represents a snapshot in time and hence it would be unrealistic to seek to replicate the findings at a later date.

Interviews are not without their limitations, especially when the interviewee is participating in their second language. With all interviews consideration has to be given to the extent to which the interviewee is giving, or is able to give, an honest account of their thoughts and feelings. Some interviewees may consider the interview setting to be unusual and risky and some may seek to self-represent themselves in a particular way (Wengraf 2001). Holstein and Gubrium (1995:9) offer a useful view of the validity of interviews:

"The validity of answers should derive not from their correspondence to meanings held within the respondent but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible".

I would argue that if we review the suggestion that we are seeking one true account through an interview and instead acknowledge that we are getting a partial, selective, time-specific account which is actively constructed by both the participant and the interviewer then we can achieve two things simultaneously. Firstly we can appreciate the unique and creative qualities of interviewing as a method of data collection and secondly we can acknowledge that interview data are co-constructed.

4.3   Sampling approach

This study was not seeking to generalise from the experience of the participants but rather to learn from their individual experiences. Each international student was participating as an individual, rather than as a representative of any particular group. The value of studying the individual and idiosyncratic suggests that participants do not have to be typical to be illuminating.

I decided that the study would focus on postgraduate MBA students who had enrolled in September 2008, when the total cohort enrolment was 123 students. Postgraduate students were chosen for this study so that I could focus on the issues of this particular group who had already had, in all but two cases, both an undergraduate degree and some years of experience working in their own countries and were therefore more likely to be relatively mature in their linguistic, social and cultural development.

All information about the research was distributed in English only. This could have led to concerns about the accessibility of the study to all international students and thus there was the potential for restricting the study to those with more highly developed English language skills. I viewed this as a filtering mechanism to ensure that participants were sufficiently confident in their English language to effectively contribute to the interview process. Students enrolling on a postgraduate business award need to be able to demonstrate an IELTS score of 6 or equivalent and as such

it can reasonably be presumed that all enrolled students have a competent but not necessarily confident level of reading and speaking in English.

Having secured ethical permission from Midlands University and the agreement of the award manager, the initial request for participation was made by me verbally in-class during the induction period. This was then followed up with two emailed requests to participate to the entire newly enrolled MBA cohort, these emails were sent two weeks apart. This approach elicited a positive response from twelve students. At this stage prospective participants were sent a more detailed description of the research along with a consent form. Interviews were then scheduled at a mutually convenient time. Reminder emails were distributed two days before their agreed interview date to those twelve who had agreed to participate in the interviews and this helped to ensure that all interviews took place, as scheduled.

I acknowledge that this process of self-selection is likely to mean that those with limited English proficiency or those lacking confidence in spoken English, were unlikely to have volunteered. I took particular care to ensure that written communication was clearly articulated in order to encourage responses. This included using clear vocabulary and asking a colleague who is a Chinese national and whose second language is English, to confirm the suitability of the text for non-native English speakers. This convenience sampling approach is consistent with an ethnographic research design where the objective is informational so as to provide individual accounts, rather than any attempt to produce representative data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The sample included individuals from China, India, Libya and Sri Lanka. Their ages ranged from 21 to 40 and three were female. The sample included individuals with a variety of educational and work experiences and different religious affiliation as well as those experiencing different stages in their family life cycle but it is nonetheless a convenience sample.

However, that all interviews were conducted in English, presented potential limitations, in so far as all students were expressing themselves in their second language. I considered using interpreters but resource limitations would have meant that they would most likely have been another student. This would have had ethical implications and could have restricted the openness of the interviews and potentially imposed a negative influence on the relationship between myself and the participants and as such I rejected this option.

A table of participants' demographics (pseudonyms used) is detailed below in Table 4.1. What I tried to do was to have some cross cultural representation and detailed portraits of individual participants can be found in the next chapter.

Table 4.1: The sample

Student code	Country of origin	Age	Gender	Participation in interview 1	Participation in interview 2
Wei	China (P)	28	M	✓	✓
Meddy	China (P)	27	F	✓	x
Andrew	China (P)	32	M	✓	✓
Ernie	China	23	M	✓	✓
Nancy	China (P)	40	F	✓	✓
Bala	India	29	M	✓	✓
Vishnu	India	24	M	✓	x
Chai	India	23	M	✓	✓
Hak	Libya	37	M	✓	✓
Thanula	Sri Lanka	25	F	✓	✓
Khan	Sri Lanka	28	M	✓	✓
Cham	Sri Lanka	26	M	✓	✓

Two participants, Meddy and Vishnu, chose not to participate in the second interview, despite several attempts to encourage participation. Neither had openly expressed dissatisfaction with the initial interview although their non-participation in the second interview process could be interpreted as such. While this was disappointing, such mortality is not untypical in ethnographic studies and is generally regarded as a natural phenomenon (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 1997).

(P) in the table denotes that the participant was a member of a cohort from a Chinese provincial government collaboration and these individuals are referred to in this study as the Peking cohort. These individuals were middle/senior managers in local government roles. At the time of the interviews, this collaboration had been in

operation for six years and cohorts of up to 25 students were sent to participate in the MBA annually. These individuals had been supported by their line managers and had been subject to competitive selection examinations and English language tests to ensure their suitability. Their tuition fees, accommodation and subsistence were paid for by the provincial Chinese government for the full duration of the award. This collaboration makes these students unique within the overall MBA cohort and this will be referred to in the analysis chapters. For example, I noted that interview data from this cohort in particular, indicated a strong sense of pride as a result of their selection and also stress due to the high expectations of improved performance on their return to work from their managers. I acknowledge that the combined characteristics of the Peking cohort are unique and the potential for skewing the findings has been taken into consideration during the analysis.

I considered that a great deal more could be learned by focusing in depth on the experience of a relatively small number of students than by collecting standardised information from a large, potentially statistically representative sample group and this approach is supported by the research of Lincoln and Guba in 2000 as well as Olesen, also in 2000. Furthermore, I considered the number of participants appropriate for the study, as an improved understanding of complex human issues was more important than the generalisability of results, as in large scale quantitative sampling. In determining the number of participants appropriate for the study, I was mindful that improved understanding of the complexity of the lived experiences of international students would generate considerable amounts of data and this would need to be carefully managed.   As the data collection and analysis collection progressed it became apparent that a large amount of data was being collected from each participant. As I wanted deep and rich accounts from the data collection, I decided that a sample size of twelve participants should provide sufficient data to for the purposes of the study (Cohen et al 2001). I believed it would have been unrealistic to gather and analyse more individual accounts and do justice to them in the research process, although there is clearly an opportunity to expand the research in the future.

4.4   Data collection: an interpretive approach to interviewing

In line with ethnographic tradition, I approached the study with a commitment to thick description, which entailed an attempt to render in detail informed interpretations of what was going on, and what was being experienced in the process of the international student experience (Geertz 1973).   When considering how to approach this aim I considered Schostak's (2006:5) question:

"How can one gain a view of each other's' lives that somehow opens the way to understanding their personal experiences and the complex connections these have with the multiplicities of alternative perspectives, subjective interests and circumstances of their world ?"

The interviews in this study were semi-structured as I was concerned that to leave the interview entirely unstructured may have taken the discussion away from the research area and therefore wasted time. This approach to interviewing drew on narrative interview traditions where the focus is on the experiences of individuals rather than factual information about their lives (Chambers 2002). Chambers argues that this does not detract from the value of interviewing as a method of data collection but rather it adds a unique dimension, the subjective, to our understanding of lived experiences. The semi-structured nature of the interviews facilitated the highlighting of the concepts which had emerged from the on-going literature review. By using the interview guides, I facilitated the development of the participants' individual accounts (refer to annex 1 – interview guides).

In accordance with a semi-structured interview approach, the interview questions were indicative only and their intent was integrated into each interview in a conversational style that was responsive to the individual student. For example: "Can you describe the best and worst experiences you have had here?" As such I have adopted Alexiadou's (2001: 52) definition of a semi structured interview:

"… an interview agenda shaped by the operationalisation of the research questions but retaining an open-ended and flexible nature. The intention is to allow the interviewees to define the situation on the basis of their own experience and so to focus on what they consider relevant".

The environment had to be essentially a safe and comfortable space for each participant. I considered using a seminar room but I felt it may be perceived as too formal and as such my office was used. This has the benefit of being free from interruption and is an informal environment with comfortable chairs, paperwork filed away and selected personal items on walls and surfaces. My limited experience of undertaking interviews, coupled with my inability to take shorthand, meant that all interviews were digitally recorded (refer to annex 2 for a sample of two participant interview transcriptions). There were no interruptions as the telephone was disconnected and a notice was displayed on my office door but there was a surprising level of background noise from a nearby road which did hamper the transcription process. The benefits of this approach outweighed the drawbacks as it meant that I could focus on the individual participants and engage in discussion without being concerned about making detailed and accurate notes. A pilot interview was conducted to identify any particular issues with the interviewing technique, recording equipment or interview guide and these were all considered to be fit for purpose.

I secured permission from all participants via email in advance of the first interview and assurances were given concerning the secure storage of the data. Each interview lasted between forty minutes and an hour and a half. The variation tended to be based on the language competency of the participant as for those with limited language ability, responses tended to be short and lacking in explanation. Throughout each interview, I employed active listening skills and verbal prompts to encourage the participants. Probing techniques such as rephrasing questions and

asking for illustrative examples as well as follow-up questions were employed in order to obtain comprehensive responses and to ensure that all interviewee accounts were understood.

I first interviewed participants between October and November 2008 and as such they had been at Midlands University for a relatively short time as their teaching commenced in mid-September. The rationale for this timing was to capture first impressions. The second round of interviews took place in May 2009, after the completion of all the taught modules and while students were commencing work on their dissertations. All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the individual participant.

4.4.1 Autumn 2008 interviews

The autumn 2008 round of interviews were concerned with encouraging participants to discuss the following areas:

1. their family and academic background
2. their decision making process including the information sources and the influences that led them to Midlands University
3. pre-arrival expectations and information sources
4. initial experiences and perceptions
5. anticipated future challenges and aspirations

The questions were relatively open in nature to allow participants an opportunity to readily respond and also to encourage them to reflect on their journey to the Midlands University by considering their academic history. Such an approach is supported by Goodson (1983) who argued that life histories can provide valuable insights into understanding individuals' personal and private experiences in an educational setting. May (2001) also referred to this approach as developmental interviewing and it was implemented to give me a way of moving chronologically from secondary school experiences to help construct the academic journey of each participant. These were useful in enabling me to focus on the individuality of each participant and so provided a useful reference point when reviewing transcripts.

4.4.2 Spring 2009 interviews

The spring 2009 round of interviews were more tailored and sought to expand on the individual issues raised in the autumn interviews, but in general, these were interested in both reflecting experiences as well as looking towards the future by exploring:

1. interim experiences at Midlands University
2. issues pertaining to academic skills and performance
3. non-study time including social experiences

4. reflections on the lived experience
5. expectations and challenges concerning award completion and return home

4.5   Data analysis

The nature of the qualitative research process is often non-linear and non-sequential and so data collection and analysis often proceed simultaneously (Frankel and Devers 2000). Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible after the interview had taken place to allow me time to reflect on both the technique and the data. I found that this facilitated the transcription process as I could visualise the participant and recall the discussion whilst transcribing it. I had no experience of audio transcription and significantly underestimated the challenge of transcribing international students speaking in their second language. I have extensive experience of verbal communication with international students but did not appreciate how much more difficult transcription from a recording would be.

Confirmation of the accuracy of participants' transcripts was established by emailing these to them and asking for any comments within a given timeframe. It is interesting to note that not all participants responded to this request and there were no requests for amendments. I considered this to be an important part of the methodology, as if the study was to fully explore my participants' experiences, then inadvertent contamination by my inappropriate interpretation or inaccurate transcription had to be minimised. At the same time I do recognise that: *"… each interview is a partial (both incomplete and biased) view of particular states of affairs or events", (*Schostak 2006:15). The data collection and analysis is concentrated on individual participants and so the analytical weighting is on the interviews (Chambers 2002). The participants told their own story within their own frame of reference, which was influenced by their age, gender, country of origin, academic and work experiences as well as their family structure and personal beliefs, amongst other variables.

The data for the study comprised over twenty hours of tape-recorded interviews. The interviews were fully transcribed by myself and the transcripts treated as raw data. The aim of the data analysis was to understand international students' perceptions of their experiences in as rigourous a manner as possible in order to provide a rich and valid interpretation of their experiences. So the attention of the analytical processes was on the ways that participants constructed meaning in the process of making sense of their experiences. During the transcription process, participants were identified by their initials as this helped me to situate myself back in the interviews. From the analysis process onwards, participants were referred to by a pseudonym.

There are different approaches to analysing qualitative data which have different theoretical foundations and for the purposes of this study I have been influenced by the work of Giorgi (1985), Pendry (1994), DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000). The process detailed below is consistent with the inductive/deductive approach where I was engaged in data analysis while simultaneously exploring the literature to establish my theoretical framework.

Stage 1: repeated readings while listening to recordings to ensure accurate transcription and to help develop a sense of discrete identity for each participant (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). The aim here was to transcribe and analyse the taped interviews as soon as possible after the interview. This process helped to ensure orientation and familiarisation. Enrolment photographs of the participants were referred to in order to situate myself back into the interview and enhance familiarisation.

The transcription process was much lengthier than I had anticipated but it did allow for considerable familiarisation with the data and this is consistent with the findings of Dowling and Brown (2010). The quality of the recordings, as a result of background traffic noise and the challenges of transcribing some heavily accented voices, meant that each interview took up to seven hours to accurately transcribe. The key benefit of having completed this long process means that I have verbatim quotations which guards against inaccurate paraphrasing. Each typewritten transcript was compared with the audio file and corrections and amendments made accordingly. This very personal and deep immersion in the data facilitated a comprehensive analysis.

At this stage I considered but rejected the use of computer software to record and analyse the interviews. This is because I was seeking to work within the ethnographic tradition of developing individual accounts because I was not really interested in issues such as repeated words and content analysis but rather the focus was on developing individual, holistic accounts. While the use of such software may have speeded up the analysis process, it could not replace the much greater familiarity with the data achieved from repeated listening and transcription.

Stage 2: having completed accurate transcription, the task then was to isolate those elements of the interviews which were relevant to the research questions. So those phrases that seemed most pertinent to describing experiences were underlined. For example, one participant noted the importance of additional higher level qualifications for career enhancement (underlined text):

"… I got that promotion as well so I was a product manager for about one and a half years and then that's when I decided to do my MBA. Because you know in the corporate ladder, <u>I cannot go beyond that if I do not have proper, professional qualifications</u>".

At this stage in the analysis I developed summaries for each individual participant, based on their interview data and this helped to inform the individual profiles which are summarised in the next chapter. Two sample interview summaries can be found in annex 3. This initial focus on individual participants, in the tradition of an ethnographic approach was considered to be an essential stage in the data analysis, which then facilitated the identification of themes.

Stage 3: the development of themes from the interviews was the next challenge in the analysis process. A thematic analysis is concerned with the content and looks to explore commonalities and differences within data. Van Manen (1990) defined a theme as a way to get at meaning and describe it and so meaning is the unit of analysis, represented within a whole paragraph, within a sentence or even as part of a phrase. For example, alienation is a common experience amongst international students with one participant noting her sense of feeling that she was different to other students (underlined text):

"… <u>it is important that you adapt so you fit in with other students</u>. Before I came I did not expect there to be so many students from different cultures here …".

Stage 4: having defined a series of potential themes, the next stage was to establish a link between the themes, sometimes trying to make sense of the apparently contradictory nature of comments from the same participant. For example, early in the first interview, one participant commented: *"… that wasn't my choice because at the time I don't have any choices … my parents wanted this* (coming to the UK) *for me".* The participant clearly articulated the strong influence of his family and the associated expectations which defined success for them. He later went on to say: "*I am gonna go back to India to live … the people who go back after their education* (overseas) – *they are a failure".* So there is an acknowledgement that although under pressure from his parents, he does not wish to remain in the UK, unlike his successful sister who is a medical doctor living in the UK but rather he feels that India is his home but his return there is likely to be a source of disappointment for his family.

Stage 5: a summary of the key themes identified for each participant was constructed and this provides a holistic account of that individual's experiences. Silverman (1997) raised the concern that by reducing interviews into codes and themes, the result can be the partial telling of the story and not the "wholeness". The development of a summary of each interview was a method of ensuring that a fuller picture was retained. This type of summary process is consistent with an inductive/deductive approach. While I kept theoretical issues such as capital loss and acquisition in transition as highlighted in the literature review in my mind, I was open to the ideas that my participants were revealing to me and thus acting in the spirit of theoretical sensitivity (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The first column of the next table summarises the key literature review themes relating to the international student experience, as discussed in the earlier chapters. These provided a framework for the interviews. The final column summarises how the combination of the literature review findings and the interview findings have provided a structure for the thematic analysis.

Table 4.2: Thematic links:

Literature review themes	Interview themes	Analysis theme title
The link between family (emotional capital) and cultural capital transmission.	Family background, parental influence, siblings, aspirations, contact, payback.	Family matters
Internationalisation. Cross cultural differences in teaching, learning and assessment.	Past subjects, courses, locations, outcomes and influence on decisions. Current experiences.	Teaching and learning experiences
Student mobility and the impact of globalisation on UK HEIs.	Travel, study abroad, career aspirations.	Globalisation challenges
Dominance of English language in education and business. The link between performance and linguistic capital.	Expectations, challenges, support.	English Language
Focus on deficit model. Impact of power distance differences. Cultural values and cultural intelligence. Cross cultural skills.	Class, values, status, attitudes, multi-culturalism, cultural intelligence, cultural dislocation, culture shock, parochialism, learning communities.	Cultural capital
Staff relationships. Impact of peers. Social networks and integration linked to adaptation.	Networks, sense of belonging/isolation, efforts to integrate, digital connections, group norms, social activities, relationships with staff, peers, locals, cross-cultural. Peking cohort behaviour.	Social capital
Impact of education on earning potential.	Investment in education, family/personal money, work experience.	Economic capital
Confidence development linked to identity and status.	Confidence, independence, self-managed learning, transformation, stress, challenges, time management, cognitive adaptation.	Inner value capital
Transition shock. Prejudice and	Transformative, changes in UK, change anticipation on return	Identity

discrimination.	home, ethnicity and identity, national stereotypes. Racism.	

4.6   The role of the researcher in the research process

I have worked within Midlands University's Business School since 1994. Joining initially as a lecturer and then working through a variety of academic and management roles to become the international partnerships manager. This role has changed in the course of undertaking this research as partnership work has increased both in volume and value; so having formerly been 50% academic and 50% management, the role is now entirely management. This experience has provided me with substantial interaction with international students, from my own student days onward and yet it may also mean that I am hindered by preconceived ways of seeing these students.

Throughout this study, I have been aware that I personally carry considerable information, experience and knowledge of these matters through my professional role within Midlands University. Throughout my research work I carried a dual identity. On the one hand I brought into my research a complex personal history of cultural, gender and age bias, in the same way as does every other researcher. I had to consider that I could be labelled as a white, middle-aged, middle class, female, Northern Irish, first generation in higher education, career academic, married with teenage daughters, with all the biases that these defining characteristics might be thought to stereotypically carry. I was also acutely aware of the possible power imbalance with the student participants and this consideration is magnified within some cultures where teaching staff are subject to power distance norms. This could have had two further implications. The first of these is that participants could have expected or hoped that policy changes would automatically be a result of their documented experiences and secondly, the perceived power imbalance could have induced discomfort in the participants and thus affected their disclosure of personal opinions. It would be disingenuous to ignore the inherent potential for a power imbalance as an older, educated, white researcher and thus I did take steps to dilute this possibility. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and I ensured that each participant was given plenty of uninterrupted time to respond to questions. Furthermore I actively listened at all times and indicated this with verbal and body language as well as demonstrating genuine interest and empathy.

During the initial contact phase, in both emails and verbal communications, emphasis was placed on my position as a doctoral student, researching independently and apart from Midlands University, as opposed to my role as a manager and academic. It was critical for me that I had no previous contact with the participating students, nor would I have any further contact either during the interim period between interviews or indeed for the duration of their award. This was an attempt to negate the potential for me to be seen as being in a position of authority and therefore power. I aimed to gain the trust of the participants while attempting to maintain transparency and

confidentiality. In order to build trust and recognising the potential power imbalance, anonymity of reporting was assured. Written undertakings concerning confidentiality and personal documentation anonymity were agreed with the Midlands University's ethics committee and with the participants themselves.   Annex 4 provides details of participant communication and the ethics approval form can be found in annex 5.

The interviews with participants were carried out face to face, offering an atmosphere of transparency and personal reassurance. The participants had the rationale behind the research explained to them at the initial meeting, where participation was requested, also in the email which was sent in response to expressions of interest and once again verbally before the interviews began. Although the prospect of institutional change could have been misunderstood from the communication, it was stressed that the research was independent of Midlands University and as such so was I, while undertaking the research.

Hellawell (2006) exhorts the value of researchers considering their position on the insider outsider continuum and Merton (1972) defined the insider as an individual who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members under investigation. Here the term "community" is a much wider concept than just an organisation and possessing intimate knowledge does not necessarily mean being a member of it yourself. Hellawell went on to argue that ideally the researcher should be both inside and outside the perceptions of the researched. That is to say, as Hammersley (1993) implied, both empathy and alienation are useful qualities for a researcher.

For me, the elements of "insiderness" or in other words connection with the participants in this research include the experience of leaving home and coming to a HEI alone; being a mature student; being a working mother and being a manager. Aspects of "outsiderness" include different religious beliefs; the gender dimension as nine out of the twelve respondents were male; lack of experience of coming to a different country and culture to study as well as studying and living in a second language in addition to parental and employer pressure to succeed. The age range of participants meant that in some cases participants were twenty years younger than me but in two cases, individuals were in my age range with family commitments that we discussed in some detail.

This discussion suggests that the relationship between the researcher and the researched is inherently complex (Collins 1998). The research process is a form of social interaction and while I had no previous or subsequent relationship with my participants, there is a possibility that they may have known of me through a network of past students. This could mean that participants felt that they were in some way being examined and so they may have sought to offer the "correct" rather than a personal response (Kehily 1995).

First person pronoun use in academic writing has received much attention from researchers such as Harwood (2005), Hyland (2004) and Koutsantoni (2007). My

decision to use the first person when discussing my findings was influenced by Holliday (2007) who described qualitative writing as an unfolding story, in which the writer gradually makes sense of data as part of an interactive and reflexive process. This implies that the voice of the researcher, as the author, is not only a significant aspect of the written study but also needs to be evident in order for the meaning to be shared with the reader. By discussing my findings in the first person, I felt encouraged to take ownership of my findings by reflecting on how my understanding of important issues and indeed my identity as an academic author, had been transformed through the writing process.

4.7   Ethics

It is important to consider the participants of a study not just as data sources but also as having significant control of the data and a relationship with the researcher (Smythe and Murray 2000). Midlands University's ethical procedures assisted in assuring the credibility of my role, as did the transparency of the process. Midlands University's Ethics Committee granted ethical approval in May 2008, before interviews commenced (see annex 5). At this time it was Keele University policy for ethical approval to be sought from only one institution and as the participants were enrolled at Midlands University I considered it appropriate to engage with Midlands University's ethical approval procedures.

I used pseudonyms from the coding point onwards and I developed a checklist for the method which was implemented to ensure adherence to the standards outlined in the initial information and contract presented to participants. The latter adhered to Diener and Crandall's (1978) principles: no harm to participants; full informed consent; no invasion of privacy; no deception. Prospective participants were asked to sign a Midlands University ethics agreement form which provided an explanation of the data to be gathered, the storage of the data and the purposes for which it would be used. This included consent to use the participants' words in the final thesis. As part of the consent procedure the participants were informed that they might withdraw their accounts from the study at any time. This process is consistent with the latest BERA (2011) ethical guidelines which refer to voluntary informed consent, openness, disclosure and the right to withdraw.

The importance of ensuring a positive response to the request for participants encouraged me to offer some form of incentive, in return for the donation of time for two interviews. When considering this I again referred to the BERA guidelines which notes that the use of incentives should be appropriate for the participants and must be recorded in the research report. I considered the various formats which such an incentive could take and I decided to offer participants a £10 book token on completion of each interview. I considered that £10 for approximately an hour of their time was a reasonable but not excessive payment. This would mean that students would be unlikely to be participating for the incentive alone but it would be a gesture of gratitude, which would hopefully be useful to them in purchasing relevant texts for their studies. Only one participant, refused the offer of the book tokens as he

indicated that he wished to help with my research and had not expected anything in return. This use of incentives is consistent with the approach of various researchers including McLachlan (2010) who offered her participants a $20 gift card for a local restaurant to encourage participation and as a token of appreciation.

In this study, international students' experiences and perceptions of studying and living in the UK, while interacting with other students, university staff and the wider community, are explored. My concern here is with the subjective experiences of these students and the social context in which these experiences occur. Clearly, in a study which does not seek to generate generalisable findings, but seeks instead to generate insights into experiences, then divergence is a quality that adds to, rather than diminishes, understanding. As such this study draws on ethnographic traditions when conceptualising the international student experience.

Generalisability is not a goal of ethnography and so my chosen method has resulted in a wealth of data such that the uniqueness and individuality of each participant can be represented. This is supported by Holliday (2002) who viewed ethnography as a methodology that focuses on a small number of cases. Whatever the number of participants involved, the claim for universal generalisations would seem to be inappropriate and it is not a claim that I would make for my study or my findings, given my focus on twelve participants. The participants speak as individuals and not as group representatives. They are all individual international students and they identify with other international students and thus their interviews provide an insight into the lived experiences of a group of international students.

In this chapter I have described the research design and underpinning methodological considerations. I needed to identify a method of inquiry that would enable me to gain an insider's view of the international student world by focusing on their past as well as their present as this has helped to define the international student experience as another phase in the participants' lives and to explore the continuities and discontinuities experienced. The next chapter describes each of the participants in order to highlight their individuality and this is followed by a thematic analysis of the interviews.

Chapter 5: Participant profiles

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a brief summary of my interactions with each of the twelve participants, based on their narrative and with reference to their academic performance on their postgraduate award, in a way which lays out the foundation for my data. This process of developing participant profiles represented the first stage of my inductive/deductive influenced data analysis approach where I sought to focus on individual students before undertaking a thematic analysis across all twelve participants. The rationale for this approach is to emphasise the individual student voice (Chambers 1992). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:467) discussed a concern that in solely focusing on a thematic analysis: *"the integrity and wholeness of each individual can be lost"*. This individual presentation therefore is a deliberate attempt on my part to raise my individual participants' profiles as often this type information is found in an annex but I take the view that the rightful place for this information is within the main body as these profiles are pivotal to the study.

Rather than seeking to explain the causes of change, my chosen methodology focused on understanding experiences from the students' perspective, gained through their life experiences. By collating rich and valid process data, this ethnographic approach seeks to capture multiple realities, leaving the participants' perspectives intact and allowing a finer and more accurate distinction of concepts (Wint and Frank 2006).   The focus of this chapter is to highlight key aspects of how the participants differ as characters but it also has to have a research function and so I was alert to the themes identified in the literature review, particularly in relation to capital. This has resulted in the presentation of distinct participant profiles through the lens of these identified themes but at the same time, taking an inductive/deductive approach, being sensitive to emerging themes, not already identified in the literature review.

These profiles are now historical snapshots as the interviews were conducted in the academic year 2008/2009, however they remain relevant as they reflect the unique experiences of each participant. They map out each participant's family background, previous education experience and hence provide the context for each individual's learning journey. Reay (2004a) noted that individual histories are vital to understanding the concept of habitus. Therefore, although habitus is a product of early childhood experience, and in particular socialisation within the family, it is continually re-structured by individuals' encounters with the outside world (Di Maggio 1979) Each participant has been allocated a pseudonym to protect their identity and their academic performance data can be found at the table at the end of this chapter. A template using headings of "family background", "educational and employment background" and "key themes" has been used to provide a framework for each participant profile. There is some variety in each set of participant details and this is reflective of their variety of experiences.

Each participant brought something different to the discussion and each interview was reviewed through the process of analysis discussed earlier, independent of the themes which had emerged from my literature review at that time. The issues that emerge within the profiles in this chapter are then further developed thematically in the two subsequent analysis chapters.

5.2   Wei

Family background:

Wei is a 28 year old married male, Chinese national and an only child. Both his parents worked at management level in a factory and neither had engagement with higher education. Wei's parents continued to play an important and influential role in his life: *"… my parents are very kind to me, they just look after me".* This care is not without some pressure and expectation of return on investment, which is often seen in families with one child. Wei commented: *"… they* (his parents) *put all their hopes on me".* The importance of family in the context of their investment in their children and in particular their education is highlighted in Richardson's 1986 research, as discussed in chapter three.

Educational and employment background:

Wei's most recent qualification was a four year degree in business administration, studied in China at a state university and completed six years previously. His current employment is in a provincial government department, providing advice to small businesses. Wei was a member of the Peking group and he had not travelled outside China before.

Key themes:

During the first interview Wei appeared to be very nervous and his responses were very considered, with the length of his sentences being short; this had noticeably improved six months later during the second interview. Wei appeared to be experiencing transition shock, as defined by Bennett (1998) in chapter two, as a sense of loss and disorientation. This is hardly surprising as his first interview was held only a week after his arrival: *"I am lonely … I am one person … I think I need to find my own way to make my life more colourful".* However Wei's concern regarding his English was a continuous theme throughout both interviews and in the second he noted his disappointment at what he perceived to be a lack of development: *"I have no time to study English, I have no time to study the language – I have to pay more attention in classes, the knowledge. So I think my English is not improved as I had hoped".*

It became clear that Wei had to work hard on his MBA and he initially experienced difficulties in listening: *"I think they* (tutors) *speak a little fast – I haven't got all the information"* and also speaking: *"I know in Chinese but it is hard work for me to do it in*

English. Sometimes the tutor may ask questions and I know the answer in my mind but it is hard work to express it in English". Wei's English was heavily accented and he had experienced difficulties with written work, despite this all taught modules were passed at the first attempt but he intermitted for one year but completed his dissertation to be awarded an MBA with merit. He was conscious of the potential disadvantage of his lack of access to English language media in China, when compared with students of other nationalities: *"… there are so many English companies and movies and magazines and advertisement – so many things in English but in India and Pakistan".* This perceived deficit had a significant impact on Wei's experience which he reflected on in his second interview: *"… maybe you need 2 or 3 years to have a life here, to live here – it's hard, it's very hard, very hard … to live here, the language I have now is enough but to enjoy life, it's not enough".*

For Wei, as well as other participants, there was a sense of surprise at the skills developed to support independent living, such as cooking: *"… my wife does all the cooking, I never cook, never, never … now it's ok I can cook for myself … I love it but maybe cooking is a very interesting thing".* Wei had, albeit temporarily, left full time employment and he also discussed his new found sense of freedom and independence: *"I have worked for about six years and every day I just work in the office, doing the work and now I get to study. In work I can't control the time – everything is managed by my boss".* This sense of independence was not without its challenges, as discussed by Ahmad (2006) in chapter two and rewards in terms of enhanced confidence, as captured by Wei: *"… I have job and everyday life is very regular … now I must manage it myself, the time … it's hard but I think I improve it – I improve those skills".*

The literature review highlighted cross cultural differences in teaching and learning and noted the challenges facing international students who are required to adapt to a set of expectations which may be very different to their past academic experiences (Warwick 2005). Wei provided an example of the impact which an accusation of academic misconduct can have on an individual:

"… the most terrible thing is actually in the first semester, I suffered under plagiarism, it is very horrible for me because I worked very hard every day …"

The core theme of lack of confidence in English competency is persistent throughout both of Wei's interviews and clearly had a significant impact on his academic studies and overall experience in the UK.

5.3 Meddy

Family background:

Meddy is a 27 year old female, Chinese national who had lived at home with her parents and she is their only child. Both her parents had been local government employees but were retired. Neither of Meddy's parents was university educated and she communicated daily with her parents.

Educational and employment background:

Meddy's most recent qualification was a four year marketing degree at a Chinese state university in Shenyang, completed five years ago. This was not based in her home town but she had returned there on completion of her degree. She had chosen to study marketing as she thought it would be easy to get a job with a marketing qualification. Meddy's employment since graduating had been in local government, first in marketing and latterly in human resources. She was a member of the Peking group and she had not travelled outside China before.

Key themes:

Meddy lacked confidence in her spoken English, despite attending an intensive six week English language course at Midlands University immediately prior to enrolment on the MBA. I had to rephrase some questions in order to elicit an appropriate response. For example when I asked what sort of examination she had to pass to be sponsored by the government, she replied: *"The examination is very common in my country if you want to become a public servant".* I then went on to rephrase my question by asking what sort of subjects were covered in her examination and she discussed the content of the exam. Meddy passed all her taught modules at the first attempt, with an average mark of 56%.

Meddy's career choice had been significantly influenced by her parents and what would appear to be an inherited sense of risk averseness: *"… if you work for the government it will be for the whole life … you maybe don't have to change your job … so secure".* She went on to comment that she initially wanted to work for a private organisation but her parents persuaded her that a career in local government would be more appropriate. This influence is illustrated when she stated:

"… because if a girl went to work in another city to work for a company – maybe at the start it is difficult, there are no parents, no friends, no relatives. You do everything by yourself, so maybe for a boy that is different because boys are very brave and more creative and can do something more difficult so they thought it was good for me to work for the government".

As both of Meddy's parents were former public servants this desire to see their daughter in the public sector could be considered to be illustrative of Bourdieu and

Passeron's (1990) theory of cultural reproduction, whereby parents encourage their children to replicate their behaviour.

Meddy also commented on the difference in the power distance as discussed in chapter three (Hofstede 1980), between her previous educational experiences in China and her recent experience in the UK:

"… (in China) – seldom the student will say anything … but in our class (in the UK) if someone wants to ask a question, they can ask anytime and the teacher will answer you with patience – I think this kind of teaching is wonderful for students – active and that's a little bit different to China".

Meddy did not respond to a request for a second interview and thus her key themes of emotional transmission of capital from her parents combined with Confucian conformity and differences in teaching and learning are limited to her first interview which took place when she had been in the UK for ten weeks but only enrolled on the MBA for four weeks.

5.4   Khan

Family background:

Khan is a 29 year old male, raised in a Muslim family in Kandy, Sri Lanka. He came from a "*big, happy*" family with two sisters and five brothers. His father was a university educated, retired secondary school teacher and his mother was a housewife who was not university educated. Two of Khan's older siblings had completed their university education in Sri Lanka and one has followed in her father's footsteps as a teacher. His siblings ranged in age from 18 to 35, the three older ones had married and Khan noted that: *"… the next in line is me".* This could imply an inevitable expectation that he would marry on his return to Sri Lanka, making his experience in the UK potentially his last as a single man. He was the first member of his family to be educated overseas but he had been to Hong Kong on business and had travelled with friends in India.

Educational and employment background:

Khan was unusual in that he was the only participant in the study who had not undertaken undergraduate study. He completed his A' levels at a boarding school but was unable to access a place at a state university (these are limited and highly competitive in Sri Lanka where state higher education is free) and so he had gone directly into employment. He had completed a variety of short courses including those delivered by the Association of Business Executives and various computing, accounting and book keeping courses. Khan had been employed by the British Council in Colombo, where he had lived independently with friends, for the last six years. He had started as a library assistant, was promoted to a customer service assistant and then a finance officer and his last position at the British Council was as

112

a product manager for the Cambridge ESOL examinations. He considered that he had progressed as far as possible in his career: *"… you know in the corporate ladder I cannot go beyond that* (his last position) *if I do not have proper professional qualifications".*

Key themes:

Khan initially presented as quiet but confident and he acknowledged that he was: *"… a sort of a reserved character"* and he hoped the MBA would increase his confidence. His spoken English was fluent and it was clear that he had a mature approach to his studies as a result of eleven years of work experience. He was the highest achiever amongst my participants, with all taught modules passed at the first attempt with an average of 64%. I would consider this to be evidence that an undergraduate degree may not always be necessary if a student has appropriate ability, work experience and motivation.

This positive attitude was reinforced during his second interview when he was asked how the past nine months had been:

"… it's been really, really great … overall it's been a really good learning experience … I am very happy with what I have achieved … the best time was when I got my results, then I know that within me I have developed self-confidence and I am happy about it".

It was noticeable in the second interview that Khan's confidence had increased not only in an academic sense but also in the context of personal development: *"… I am not scared to just travel and explore. I have been to London a couple of times and it's been good".* Confidence was identified by Boyatzis and Renio (1989) in chapter three, as one the elements of inner-value capital which through improvement, can result in tangible positive outcomes and Khan's experience provides an illustration of this.

Khan's interviews highlighted his understanding of globalisation and his interest in studying outside his home country: *"… main thing is cultural exposure – the environment. I could do an MBA in Sri Lanka but there would not be much of an international approach".* Khan then goes on to note that there is an increase in international organisations operating in Sri Lanka and they expect employees to have experience outside Sri Lanka. The link between globalisation, higher education and subsequent employment has been discussed in chapter two with particular reference to Whalley (1997) who observed that globalisation has transformed the occupational landscape for many graduates.

In the first interview Khan discussed his concerns regarding the potentially negative impact on his English language development as a result of working with other international students whose language competency was lower than his:

"… when you work with them (Chinese students) *they find it very difficult to talk and you find it very difficult to make them understand – you feel like your level of English is also going down sometimes …"*

By the time of the second interview, Khan's experience of working with Chinese students had resulted in a more negative perspective: *"… they* (Chinese students) *do not think of the broader picture, they always want to stick together, they can be aggressive sometimes"*. The literature review noted that much has been written about the challenges of facilitating relationships between home and international students but a further theme which emerged from my data concerned intra-international student relationships, with Khan being one of the participants to raise this as a concern.

5.5 Bala

Family background:

Bala was a 29 year old Indian national and this was his first time overseas. He made frequent references to his university educated parents and in particular his mother, during the course of both interviews and it became clear that they had a strong influence over him: *"I would be going to school because my parents wanted me to but I would not be concentrating"*. The extent of this influence became clear when he discussed his undergraduate engineering degree when he remarked that at that time he had been given no choice but to follow his parent's wishes. It was talking to Bala that made me really appreciate the importance of family for some international students and the pressures they faced as a result of their expectations. When discussing his move to the UK, Bala again referred to his parents' influence, implying his lack of control: *"… since I have been exported to a different culture and a different place"*. Bala had two sisters, one living in the US and another working as a doctor in the UK, after discussing how proud his parents were of his sisters, he commented with some resignation: *"… and a son who is working in a call centre, you have to go to some place, to some foreign country so they can be proud of you so that is life"*.

Educational and employment background:

Bala had reluctantly and with some difficulty, completed an undergraduate mechanical engineering degree, at the specific request of his father who had been an engineer. He had not enjoyed studying this subject and had found in particular, the mathematical aspects very challenging. He had not gained employment in engineering as he achieved a low classification but instead he joined the marketing department of a small company who manufactured machinery. This involved significant travel within India which he did not enjoy and so he resigned. His most recent position in India had been as a call centre supervisor, where he had worked for four years. He was proud of his promotion to supervisor and while his work could be demanding, as it involved shift work and responding to challenging customers, it was well paid and he felt that it was acceptable.

Key themes:

Bala was verbally proficient but spoke with a significant accent which he did not acknowledge. On two separate occasions he considered an individual had acted in a deliberately racist way, as they claimed to be unable to understand him and he found this upsetting: *"I think the joke is on me … I am very sure I was talking to them very slowly, I am very sure that if the same came out of a white person's mouth, they would have understood".* This experience echoes Bradley's (2000) findings discussed in the literature review where such incidents can result in feelings of marginalisation and alienation. Bala had been subject to verbal racial abuse on his first day in the UK and that is likely to have increased his sensitivity.

When questioned in the second interview as to what he considered to be the most positive aspect of his experience, Bala thought it was the opportunity to meet and work with students of different nationalities. He considered his most significant challenge was coping with loneliness, despite having regular access to communication with family members, this seemed to have been something of a surprise for him as he had been alone before: *"I lived alone in a hotel room for two years while I was working … I have stayed away from my home and my family and I don't feel lonely in India. But for some reason at different points in time, I have felt really lonely"* (in the UK). Bala could be said to be experiencing what Furnham and Bochner (1986) termed culture shock and in this case that is manifested as a grief reaction to loss of country and family.

5.6   Hak

Family background:

Hak was interesting as his immediate family accompanied him to the UK and stayed with him for a year. Hak's parents were both deceased and he was married with a four year old daughter and his wife, a dentist, gave birth to a son in the period between interviews. While much has been written about the influence of parents on international students, Hak encouraged me to consider a new theme which is the influence of the international student experience on accompanying family members, both spouses and children.

Hak was the second eldest of the participants at 37, he came from Libya and was a practicing Muslim. His faith was a central aspect of his life and one which caused him significant homesickness. In his second interview when asked if he thought he could live in the UK, he noted: *"I couldn't live in the UK… it is completely different here… I find a big gap between the Islam – those people* (at a local mosque) *they are ok but they have a gap in their understanding of Islam".*   This meant that Hak was unable to construct bonding capital by developing relationships with those who shared his faith views (Putnam 2000). Hak had previously travelled overseas on holiday and had

visited friends who were postgraduate students at Midlands University a few months prior to his enrolment and this visit had been critical in his decision to follow them.

Educational and employment background:

Hak had completed a four year first degree in computer science in Libya, taught in Arabic, fifteen years previously. He had then gone on to work for a north African IT company and he was now self-employed with his brother, running a small IT servicing and supply business. His motivation for undertaking the MBA was: *"… to improve my company and to improve my English language"*.

Key themes:

Hak was an enthusiastic student who felt lucky to be able to study in the UK. He was articulate but had some vocabulary limitations which he was aware of. He had completed an intensive language course prior to enrolment. Hak was conscious that he had not studied for some time and this coupled with his linguistic limitations may have affected his performance. He passed four modules the first time, a further two modules at the second attempt and another two required a third attempt. Hak's results support the link between academic performance and level of English proficiency which was highlighted in the literature review with authors such as Zhang and Brunton (2007) commenting on the relationship. Hak neatly summarised his perception of the complexity of the English language for a non-native speaker:

"… there is not just one English language, there is one English language for study, and another one for the street language and one for the people from India and Pakistan and another for the people from China – all those speak special English so I find it really difficult".

During his second interview, Hak admitted that he had struggled with his assessments: *"I find it is difficult – it is not easy to do MBA by another language … so I had many barriers"*. He also made reference to adjusting to different assessment methods:

"… in my country we don't use the same method of learning – I mean we don't have assignment, you have to do exam. So an exam – it is easy because you know from where you have to start and where you have to finish. But with an assignment – you do not know from where to start and it will not be finished".

Although later in the same interview he acknowledged that he thought that assessments were superior in terms of learning, when compared to examinations: *"… in the exam you have to learn it and keep it but in an assignments you have to apply – it's better"*. The challenges faced by international students were discussed in the literature review with authors such as Townsend and Poh (2008) focused on international students' academic difficulties linked to adjustment to differences in teaching and assessment and their findings are particularly relevant to Hak.

5.7 Cham

Family background:

Cham was a 26 year old male student from Sri Lanka and this was his first overseas visit. His father was a retired electrical engineer who was university educated. His mother was not university educated and was a housewife. Cham has one older, married sister who lives in the UK. His parents were supportive of his wish to study overseas*: "… my parents told me that if you can do this in a year, you need to finish this quickly".* Cham discussed his parent's aspirations: *"I want to get through the MBA with colours and so I am working hard for that because it is my parents' hope so I must".* In the first interview Cham noted his father's view of education, suggesting the domestic transmission of capital (Reay 2000)*: "… any money spent on education is an investment – it can earn more money".* And later in the second interview, the term investment is repeated*: "… this is an investment for the future so I want to make them* (his parents) *happy".*

Educational and employment background:

Cham had completed a four year degree in information management at a university in Colombo, franchised from an Irish university and as such he considered that he had some understanding of the UK education system. Since graduating he had been employed as a computer programmer and latterly as a systems engineer in a privately owned company. He felt that an MBA would increase his promotion opportunities into a management level. He had the added security that his last employer had asked if he would work for them on his return, so he was hoping to be promoted.

Key themes:

Cham was proficient in English and had passed all his taught modules first time, with an average score of 60%. Cham was initially living in shared privately rented accommodation with medical professionals from China, with no internet access and he found the transition challenging: *"… at this stage it was too difficult – I am totally out from my family and nobody here to talk with me".* Part of the transition shock stems from living in a different culture but another aspect relates to living independently for the first time: *"… I have faced everything, I had to do everything by myself, I have to find a job, I have to deal with the study, I have to cook myself and I have to buy things – it's hard, I have no family".*

The first interview was held in mid-October and the autumnal weather was magnifying his homesickness. When asked if he would return home on completion of his course or look for work in the UK, Cham replied: *"I am thinking of returning home as soon as I can – these days are very cold and I miss my family".* This experience supports McClure's (2007) research which found that adjustment for international students was most difficult in the first six months. By the time of the second interview, Cham had

117

secured accommodation with friends and he clearly felt much happier with his situation. Like Bala, Cham was upset by a racially motivated incident: *"…I went to a forest for a walk with a British guy and some kids were shouting Pakistan, Pakistan – so we went into the forest for a walk and when we came back we found that the wing mirrors had been broken"*.

5.8   Thanula

Family background:

Thanula was a 25 year old Sri Lankan from Colombo. Her family was originally from India and she had been born there. Her father ran his own business and her mother was a housewife, neither had attended university. Thanula's parents and in particular her father, were supportive of her education: *"… they think it is very important … my father will be happy wherever I go. My father's dream is to see me graduate with a PhD".* Thanula provided an example of how cultural capital is primarily transmitted via the family and in this way children acquire certain dispositions which reflect the family status and values (Pimpa 2002).

Educational and employment background:

Thanula had completed a business information technology degree at a private higher education institution in Colombo, franchised by Midlands University. She considered this gave her an advantage over other students as she had some understanding of the UK education system. On graduating she had worked for a management consultancy, supporting marketing activities and latterly at the British Council in Colombo, as a school and college liaison officer, alongside Khan.

Key themes:

Thanula was a confident English language speaker. She experienced some ill health due to stress, during her time at Midlands University and she considered that this had an adverse impact on her performance. The transition of cultures in addition to the move from being dependent to independent was also a cause of shock: *"Sri Lanka is not like here – you live with your parents until you get married and your parents look after you – your mum does everything for you".* This combination of changes was referred to in the literature review as change overload (Hess and Linderman (2002: 155). Thanula passed seven modules at the first attempt and another module was passed on the second attempt. Her average mark was 56%.

Thanula secured part time employment for twenty hours a week, at a national grocery retailer. She had been promoted to team leader and as such for the first time she had line management responsibilities. This provided Thanula with some challenges: *"… today they* (checkout staff) *will be extremely helpful and tomorrow they will be like a nasty monster and I will be wow, where did that come from?"* This employment also provided her with an added incentive to manage her time effectively, she commented

on how different her life was in the UK, when compared with living with her family: *"… it's different, I didn't have to shop for food, cook my meals, keep a house clean but here you have so many responsibilities. I need to go to lectures, I need to cook food, I need to do this and that – it's very complicated"*.

Thanula's experience of working at the British Council had encouraged her to consider working for an international organisation and to help her secure this she thought she would need: *"… not just the qualification… but also the experience of working with so many different people … our classes are like a small world"*. Thanula's recognition that she needed to develop cross cultural skills in order to secure employment in an increasingly globalised economy resonates with the findings of researchers such as Heitmann (2005) and Shiel (2008), as discussed in the literature review.

Like her friend Khan, Thanula discussed her concerns about intra-international student relationships: *"… it was difficult at the beginning because everyone had their own way of talking English … I have a Chinese friend and she was completely off, she did not know a single word of English when she came here"*. This description is extremely unlikely as all international students need to provide evidence of English language competency and it is more likely that the individual was lacking in verbal confidence.

Thanula spoke about a level of internal conflict relating to her sensitivity concerning expected behaviours in her first interview: *"… I notice that I am speaking in a lower voice this week – in Sri Lanka I speak quickly and in a loud voice but here I do not think this is ok?"* This suppression of behaviour linked to identity is an immigrant trait noted in the literature review by Eze (2011) who found that many immigrants masked aspects of their identity in order to gain acceptance. By the time of the second interview, nine months later, Thanula's confidence had increased to such an extent that she felt she had reverted to her true behaviour: *"… just take that mask away and throw it out and be what you are"*.

Thanula had some reservations about returning home:

"… if I go home it's going to be a shock for people – the way I am now and the way I used to be … in my community especially they still believe that you have to get married in this way and they think that girls should talk less, not be open-minded and stuff like that. So this change could come up with some clashes like that".

This anticipation of what Cannon (2000) referred to as reverse culture shock, where international students returning to their country of origin can feel like strangers in their own country was considered in the literature review

5.9   Chai

Family background:

Chai was a 24 year old male Indian student and it was his first trip outside India. His parents had been university educated and they both worked in university administration. He had one older, married sister. When asked what his parent's response had been to his wish to undertake further studies in the UK, Chai replied:

"… they were very frightened, they actually have always had a feeling that I have to go away for further studies but when I give a shock to them, when I tell them I am going to the UK for higher studies, they were more frightened. But they also understood and they were happy".

This response was probed further and he commented that their fear was linked to the financial aspect of supporting him. Chai was one of several participants who used the term investment when discussing his parent's approach to funding his studies. This supports the neoclassical economic view of Monk and Whittaker (2008) in respect to higher education, as discussed in the literature review.

Educational and employment background:

Chai had completed a four year engineering degree in India in his home city and had then gone into IT servicing and latterly software engineering consulting. The medium of instruction throughout his education in India had been English. Chai's decision to enrol on a postgraduate business award was based on his career development aspiration: *"… I have to learn managerial skills for the future".* Chai's choice of the UK was based on positive word of mouth from friends and his perception of the UK education system, as well as the potential to gain employment in the UK following the completion of his MBA: *"… the education system and the opportunities around – all these things gather up and it feels like it's a good opportunity to study here and get jobs".* As discussed in chapter one, this perspective reflects the positive view of the policy in force at the time, when international students could access work visas for up to two years, dependent on meeting certain criteria.

Key themes:

Chai demonstrated good English proficiency during the interviews and passed all his taught modules at the first attempt with an average of 63%. He was softly spoken and rather shy so additional efforts, such as asking more open questions, had to be made to engage with him and encourage more discursive responses.

Chai described the difficulties experienced in his first few days at Midlands University:

"… the first two days were really difficult and I am staying in a single room in halls so I could not find any friends in the first few days and there were no classes going on – it was hard for me and for two days I was homesick but now I am settled here".

This sense of isolation is not unusual and it has been noted within the literature review that loneliness is a common experience for many international students in the early days of their stay (Church 1982). By the time of the second interview, it was clear that Chai's social life had improved *"… I have a lot of friends here and I go to the park and play some cricket".* The importance of maintaining contact with these friends was succinctly, if not rather dramatically expressed by Chai: *"… if we lose all those contacts there will be no meaning to coming here".* The bonding and bridging capital established by Chai was therefore regarded as long term, extending beyond living in the same city (Baruch, Bell and Gray 2005). Chai discussed working and studying in an international environment from a positive perspective: *"… everywhere I go I see different people from different backgrounds and different countries … that's one thing I will be missing".*

5.10   Nancy

Family background:

Nancy was the eldest of the participants at 40. She came from China and was one of the Peking group. She was an associate dean of English at a state university, married to a senior government official, with two daughters aged sixteen and nine. Her youngest daughter accompanied her. They lived initially in halls of residence and then in private residential accommodation and the child attended a local primary school. Despite having very limited English language skills in September, by the following April, when I met with her daughter at a social function, she was impressively fluent, with a more authentic accent than her mother.

Nancy was anxious to highlight that her family were not typically Chinese as they had all travelled overseas: *"I think I am not that traditional, although I am very traditional Chinese. When compared with the majority of Chinese, I am not that traditional".* This apparent contradiction neatly encapsulates the dilemma which some international students find themselves in when considering their national identity. This could be described as the reverse of the national identity research of Eze (2011) discussed in the literature review which found that immigrants felt the need to mask aspects of their identity in order to assimilate into a new foreign environment. In Nancy's case, her and her family's experiences of living overseas may mean they feel they have to adapt their internationalised behaviour, while in China, in order to be seen as traditional and thus conformist. Nancy and her family had lived in the US for a year and had also travelled in Canada and Europe. Nancy's parents were both elderly and when discussing them she became visibly upset and so I considered it insensitive to pursue that line of questioning.

Educational and employment background:

Nancy had taken her first degree in English language and literature in China and she commented that when she had completed this in the mid-1980s English was not widely spoken: *"… very few and everybody thought learning English will be having a bigger vision and more ways to understand another culture and understand the world better"*. This quote demonstrated Nancy's outward, international perspective at a time when China was isolated from the wider world as a result of Chinese government policy.

Key themes:

Nancy considered the opportunity to study for an MBA in the UK was an honour and that those from the Peking group should be treated differently to younger students as they all had work experience and had been selected by their managers. Nancy passed all her taught modules at the first attempt with an average mark of 60%.

Nancy commented in particular on the communication challenges she faced with both staff: *"… some teachers speak with an Indian accent … teachers with strong accents make English more difficult for us"* and students: *"… most of our classmates are speaking Indian English and we don't think we will have so many chances to be together with Indians"*.

These concerns with both students and the local population whose families originated from Asia, were clearly a cause of some distress: *"I do not have any discrimination about the Indians but we just feel we are surrounded by Indians here"*. This comment could be interpreted as having racist undertones as Nancy could have experienced feelings of intimidation by being around individuals who are not like her. The move from a mono-cultural to a multi-cultural environment will inevitably bring challenges and perceptions are based on individual interpretations of multi-culturalism. The literature review reported on Ahmad's 2006 study where it was found that some international students were disappointed at the limited opportunities for interaction with the local population. It may be that from Nancy's perspective she expected the local population to be white British rather than multi-cultural British.

5.11 Vishnu

Family background:

Vishnu was a 24 year old Indian student and this was his first experience overseas. Neither of his parents had been university educated. He told the story of how his father might have gone onto further education but his father's father died and so he had to work to support his family. His mother was a housewife and his father owned two businesses in real estate and brick manufacturing. He had one older, married sister and he lived at home with his parents and grandmother. Vishnu's father did not want him to go into the family businesses as he considered there to be limited

prospects and opportunities for expansion due to extensive on-going property development.

Educational and employment background:

Vishnu had completed a degree in commerce and had been working for Deutsche Bank in the accounts reconciliation department for two years. He was taking the finance specialism on the MBA. His motivation for undertaking the MBA was to help him move from his current back office role to a middle or front office job within the banking sector. Vishnu's decision to study in the UK had been influenced by friends who shared their positive experiences with him. This is consistent with the findings of Abhayawansa and Fonseca (2010) who discussed the influence of friends on those making decisions concerning international education, particularly those with relevant experience.

Key themes:

Vishnu was verbally proficient and confident. He was the only participant who seemed to have definitive non-study plans as he was interested in cars and motorbikes and planned to attend a number of rallies. He passed all but one taught module at the first attempt and had an average pass mark of 57%. Despite several requests, Vishnu declined to participate in the second interview.

When asked to consider whether he thought the experience would change him, Vishnu categorically stated: *"… absolutely not!"* but he then went on to comment that already he had noticed how genders integrated and he felt that was something he was not familiar with as he had few friends who were female. A further observed cultural difference was Vishnu's contact with Pakistani nationals with whom he had developed friendships: *"… it is different here, you don't have any fight … this is a political issue which is happening back home not a personal issue".* This quotation potentially contradicts Kashima and Loh's (2006) suggestion that heritage cultural identity is often assumed to be maintained rather than transformed when studying in a foreign country. The real test of this transformation would be whether Vishnu maintained contact with friends from Pakistan on his return home. At the same time Vishnu's experience is consistent with Posner et al (1982) who found that being in a different situation can challenge of values and preconceptions which in Vishnu's case related to gender and country of origin.

While Vishnu had not personally experienced racism, he recounted how a Nigerian friend had been verbally racially abused but he felt this was an unusual incident: *"… that is the first time I think it has happened in this place – because all the people … they have all been kind, helping and friendly".*

5.12   Andrew

Family background:

Andrew was 31, Chinese and a member of the Peking group. He came from a large industrial city that was well known for its steel and aircraft manufacturing. He was married and lived with his wife but visited his parents once or twice a week. Both his parents had been university educated. His mother was a retired secondary school teacher and his father a retired college teacher, both specialised in the Chinese language. He had one older sister who was also university educated, she had completed an English degree and was employed by a private organisation.

Educational and employment background:

Andrew had completed a four year degree in economics and administration management at a state university in China. He had been working as an advisor to the local mayor's office where he was responsible for undertaking research and writing reports into areas such as economics, industry, agriculture and social issues.

Key themes:

Andrew presented as very nervous, lacking in confidence and conscious of the limitations of his verbal English in his first interview. Despite this, he passed all his taught modules at the first attempt with an average mark of 60%.

Andrew considered himself to be fortunate to have been selected from around 200 applicants to study in the UK. He remarked on the considerable investment made by the local authority as they delivered a variety of activities to prepare the chosen individuals for life and study overseas. These sessions included language classes, cultural awareness workshops and: *"… how to deal with some particular things, how to keep the secrets of our country".* When asked to elaborate on the last comment, Andrew commented that as he was a local government employee he would have access to confidential information. The fact that advice was provided on this subject could be seen to be indicative of a closed society, lacking in transparency and suspicious of those who do not share the same background.

Despite not having travelled overseas before and presumably having limited contact with foreigners, Andrew discussed a stereotype of Chinese students: *"… sometimes it is difficult you know for Chinese, it is difficult to get along with other people from different country".* Such a view would support the findings of Church (1982) where the development of national enclaves was seen as a mechanism for reducing stress and reducing the need for adjustment. Andrew later went on to say that because English was so rarely spoken in China, exacerbated by limited English language media access, that there was little opportunity for him to improve his spoken English whilst in China.

5.13 Ernie

Family background:

Ernie was a male Chinese student aged 22 and this was his first experience outside China. Both his parents were university educated and they both lectured in a state university, his father in history and his mother in philosophy. Ernie was an only child and he acknowledged the influence and support of his parents in his education:

"… I come here because I get a lot of support, the support of my family because my parents they are both teachers so they are very understanding, they know I want to get more … to study here you have to spend a lot of money … I should thank them for giving me the opportunity to get here".

This quote illustrates the influence of parents and the hereditary transmission of cultural capital. As with other participants, the sense of debt owed to parents was acknowledged: *"… I will pay them back of course"*.

Educational and employment background:

Ernie had completed a three year degree in mathematics and computer science at a Chinese state university and had no work experience as he had recently graduated. It is unusual for an MBA student not to have some work experience but as Ernie explained: *"… during my studies I think perhaps that mathematics is not the subject for me … at university it is very complicated and not so close to life"*. Ernie's decision to come to the UK was influenced by his desire to study business and his decision to study in the UK was influenced by his peers: *"… many of my friends they have been to the UK and they share their experience with me"*. This again is consistent with the findings of Abhayawansa and Fonseca (2010) who identified the influence of friends in such decision making. The duration of the course, perhaps linked to the related expenditure, was another influencing factor: *"… it will only take one year here so this is much faster than in other countries because other countries is usually is maybe two or longer"*.

Key themes:

Ernie was lacking in confidence and during the first interview our discussion was hampered by his limited vocabulary and hence was the shortest interview recorded at just over half an hour. Ernie had undertaken an intensive English language course over the summer at Midlands University and this appears to have been effective as he passed all taught modules at the first attempt with an average mark of 60%.

Ernie succinctly noted his experience of his first few weeks in the UK: *"… because of the city, the streets, the architecture, the way people live here, their habits and the food … all things are different"*. This quote highlights what Bennett (1998) describes

as transition shock brought about by a change in one's environment and which in Ernie's case seems to impact on many aspects of living in the UK.

Ernie had a pragmatic view of his UK education: *"I already expect that it would be hard, it's not like a holiday … before I came here I already thought about it and it is not so simple".* He enjoyed mixing with other international students as this gave him an opportunity to practice his spoken English and develop a global perspective: *"… to understand what you know in other parts of countries, what other people are thinking about. It changed our opinion sometimes".* It is interesting to note the use of the term we, which could be a grammatical inconsistency or could be indicative of Ernie's Confucian culture where there is an expectation of shared, collectivist views.

5.14   Participant performance

As can be seen from the participant profiles, the educational backgrounds of the participants varied considerably. Six came from an engineering or computing background and so were using the MBA as an opportunity to both convert to business and to access middle management levels. Of the remaining six students, one did not have a first degree and another was an English language specialist; the remaining four had undergraduate degrees in business related subjects.   All but Khan had achieved an undergraduate degree and the two mature students, Hak and Nancy, had completed their first degree almost two decades before and so were understandably apprehensive about resuming studying. The performance data would suggest that neither the first degree subject not the age of the participant had a noticeable impact on their performance. When considering the average mark attained by Peking students in their taught modules, it was 59% and the average dissertation mark from the three Peking students who submitted was 53%. There is no significant difference between the Peking students' performance and that of the other students in my study. The other eight students had an average mark of 59% in their taught modules and 56% in their dissertation. While these data cannot be considered to be statistically significant, due to the relatively small numbers, they do not support Nancy's belief that the Peking students have superior capabilities.

The next table illustrates the MBA performance of the individual participants:

Table 5.1: Participant performance

	Taught modules passed first time (8)	Average % mark for taught modules (pass mark is 50%)	Dissertation mark (pass mark is 50%)	Final award
Wei	All 8	60%	50%	MBA - merit
Meddy	All 8	56%	50%	MBA – pass
Khan	All 8	64%	58%	MBA – merit
Bala	4	54%	50%	MBA – pass
Hak	6	54%	50% on 3rd attempt	MBA - pass
Cham	7	60%	55%	MBA – merit
Thanula	6	56%	55%	MBA – pass
Chai	All 8	63%	64%	MBA – merit
Nancy	All 8	60%	60%	MBA – merit
Vishnu	7	57%	55%	MBA – pass
Andrew	All 8	60%	Failed x 3	Failed MBA – Diploma with merit
Ernie	All 8	60%	60%	MBA – pass

5.15   Dominant themes

This chapter has highlighted the range of backgrounds, experiences and influences which have contributed to these individuals' journeys to Midlands University to study for an MBA. In the process each participant has raised their own unique set of issues and it has been possible to identify key themes which emerged from their interviews and these have added to those identified in the literature review. Some of these themes demonstrate a clear integration with the literature. For example an appreciation of the influence of families adds greater depth to the understanding of how cultural capital is transmitted within the family structure.

These themes can be divided into two discrete groups: the first four relate to more general contextual factors relating to being an international postgraduate student, while the second group focuses more specifically on the loss and acquisition of various forms of capital.

1. **The influence of family** – parents, siblings, spouses and children all influenced participants in their decision to study overseas. While this influence was largely positive, Bala in particular discussed the influence of his mother and provided an example of how family support can result in limited personal choices. For some participants family support included a high level of financial and emotional support and for those who had left behind children such as Nancy, spouses as in the case of Wei, and elderly relatives again as with Nancy, there was a clear sense of temporary loss which participants tried to mediate by focusing on the long term benefits for relatively short term investment.

2. **The impact of globalisation** – all participants came from developing economies where the influence of government policy had encouraged international organisations to operate and this had affected the employment market. The Sri Lankan participants in particular noted the increased opportunities to work for international organisations, following a period of post-conflict economic investment and development. For many (the exception being the Peking students who were tied to their government employer) the acquisition of a British MBA was seen as a route to middle management and thereby a secure career, in an international organisation. The desire for an understanding of western business culture was an added expectation, particularly for the Peking cohort.

3. **English language competency** – the level of verbal language competency amongst participants was variable. In particular those from China such as Wei, Andrew and Ernie as well as Hak from Libya, considered themselves to be disadvantaged because of their limited access to English language media and limited opportunity to practice their spoken English in their home country. Those from India and Sri Lanka such as Bala, Thanula and Khan initially considered themselves to be at an advantage, as for many the medium of instruction for their previous studies had been English but they soon came to appreciate the variability of vocabulary and accents which they had to negotiate.

4. **Experiences of and responses to teaching and learning** – for the majority of participants most of their educational experiences in their country of origin had been teacher-led and involved limited student participation. The move to a more dynamic, student-focused, group-based, interactive style of teaching had encouraged participants such as Meddy to reflect on their previous

experiences and seek to identify mechanisms to respond to the challenges implicit in these different approaches.

Capital – loss and acquisition:

5. **Cultural capital** - the concept of culture shock is widely acknowledged in the literature and my interviews referred to a variety of experiences which fall under this term. These included conflicting values, which affected Hak in particular as a practicing Muslim; mono and multi-culturalism which caused Nancy some concerns; cultural dislocation and ghettoisation. The focus for participants such as Ernie and Hak was on the differences which they were experiencing and these were articulated in terms of comparing experiences in their country of origin and the UK.

6. **Social capital** – issues which arose here included the loss of the social networks which had been accrued in the country of origin and this included a network of family with Nancy in particular missing her elderly parents, family and work colleagues. The reconstruction of social capital in an effort to establish group connections both in the development of learning communities and wider social relationships was seen as an objective for most but not all participants, with many such as Cham finding this initially very difficult.

7. **Economic capital** – the term investment was frequently used by participants including Wei, Cham and Chai and this resulted in a sense of debt to sponsoring parents and employers. For some participants such as Cham the need to work to help contribute to their finances was a cause of concern due to the dearth of part time employment as a result of the recession. All participants were hopeful that the acquisition of a British MBA would enhance their ability to accrue economic capital in their future career.

8. **Inner value capital** – most participants had clear expectations of the MBA in terms of transformational skills development, although Bala was sceptical as to whether he would benefit. The majority of participants considered that both the content of the MBA and the experience of living independently overseas would for example enhance their confidence as well as their English language. In the case of Hak there was an expectation that he would be in a better position to help effectively manage and develop his family business. Few participants had anticipated the stress that would result from their need to adapt, with Thanula in particular struggling at least initially to cope.

9. **Identity** – participants, particularly those from China, often defined themselves on the basis of their national identity and they sometimes found this challenged by their experiences in the UK. For example Ernie expressed feelings of displacement and alienation in his initial interview. This experience had encouraged participants to reflect on aspects such as gender perceptions and ethnicity in the case of Vishnu and for Hak in particular, faith and how these

factors had been influenced by their experiences in the UK. The anticipation of a further period of transition when returning to their country of origin and how their transformation would be received by family and friends, was a cause of concern for some participants, including Thanula and Khan.

The following two chapters will go on to consider each of these themes in further detail with reference to the narrative provided by participants in their interviews.

Chapter 6: Learning and being an international student

6.1 Introduction

This is the first of two analytical chapters in which I will focus on the research aims concerned with identifying the factors which contributed to my international students' different experiences. Particular reference will be made as to how the international students in my study reported negotiating language challenges and evaluating how these international students understand their identity in a foreign environment. The research aim which focuses on the critical analysis of the most significant challenges involved in this transition process, using a capital framework will be discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter starts by analysing two core influences which seemed to have motivated my participants to study overseas – their family and the impact of globalisation. I will then go on to consider the influence of language competency and my participants' experiences of teaching, learning and assessment and will end with a discussion concerning the participants' perceptions of identity. These influences have been derived from a combination of my literature review and participant interviews.

The impact of family was not a factor which I had originally planned to focus on, but when analysing the interviews it became clear that the influence and financial support, in particular for those participants who were dependent on their of parents, was both a key motivator and cause for concern for some of my participants. For example Bala commented:

"So this is the thing … my parents have 3 children, my elder sister had moved to America, they are proud of her, their other daughter is a doctor, here in England, they are proud of her and a son who is working in a call centre, you have to go to some place, to some foreign country so they can be proud of you so that is life".

A number of studies have found that many international students come from cultures and families where there are clear expectations and behavioural norms, for example relating to education, career and marriage (Waters 2005; Abhayawansa and Fonseca 2010). Bala's comment reflects the earlier discussion concerning Bourdieu (1986) who wrote about the importance of the domestic and hereditary transmission of cultural capital within the family unit and Bala provides an interesting example of the impact which family can have on an international student. Such culturally founded expectations were discussed by a number of my participants including Thanula, aged 25, who spoke about her family's plans for her on her return home:

"They tell me you can do your DBA later when you have time, now you need to get married, they say already you are 4 years behind, terrible isn't it! So that's what their worry is – so I need to fulfil that – they have fulfilled my dreams, it is now my time to fulfil their dreams and they think that the only way for me to fulfil their dreams is for me to get married".

The influence of globalisation on student mobility, in the context of anticipated career development, has been discussed in the literature review with researchers such as Zerehi (2008) for example commenting on the significant contribution international graduates make to the provision of healthcare in the US. The desire to secure employment with an international organisation, which was articulated by some of my participants, and therefore to have different skills and knowledge expectations, when compared to a local employer, emerged as a theme in my participant interviews. For those participants coming from developing countries or in the case of Chinese students, from a country where government policy affects information access, there was an expectation that an international experience would help to develop a deeper understanding of UK culture and the western business environment. Wei said that this was his aspiration:

"… my only purpose is to get more knowledge about business here and about the society in the UK. To know the UK in my heart – the UK is a legend and I want to know, I try to know more about it".

As has already been discussed in the literature review, the impact of living, working and studying in an English language environment presents challenges to many international students for whom English is their second language and in particular for those who may have had limited exposure to English language media (Biggs and Watkins 1996). International students come from a diverse range of teaching and learning traditions and in the case of MBA students in particular, who may only be resident in the UK for less than a year, there is an expectation that they will quickly adapt to the requirements of a UK university environment. This is despite fundamental aspects such as teaching and learning styles as well as assessment formats, being new or even contradictory to their previous educational experiences and so this is an important aspect of the international student experience.

The final section in this chapter is concerned with student identity and seeks to demonstrate the potentially transformational affect of international study on individual identities. Some participants made clear comments concerning how they felt they had changed as a result of the experience, while for others there was reluctance, perhaps even fear of any change taking place. Some participants also noted concern as to how they would fit back into their former lives, referred to in the literature as reverse culture shock, as they felt they had changed and so others from their home environment may find this challenging.

6.2   Family matters –
"… it's all changed – they will have a lot of expectations"

As several of my participants were mature, independent students, I am using the term family to refer not only to parental influence, as would be expected in the case of younger students who may be financially dependent but it also includes spouses and children, all of whom are affected by an individual's decision to study overseas.

The enduring and variable influence of family on international students has been discussed, with for example Lee and Morrish (2010:6) noting the high level of parental influence in respect of Chinese students:

" …while parents are totally committed to giving the best education and give the impression that the final decision rests on the children, parents seem very much in control behind the scene, and children too seem to finally defer to their parents".

The next table indicates the higher educational experiences of the parents of my participants. I consider this interesting in the light of authors such as Jonsson (1987) and Egerton (1997) who used parental education as a proxy for cultural capital. This is consistent with a Bourdieusian perspective, since:

"… a powerful and exclusive relationship between the level of education and cultural practice exists, the cultural competence of the childhood family is seen as determined by, or at least reflected in, the parents' level of education" (Bourdieu 1977:492).

This contrasts with research in the UK by Davies, Mangan and Hughes (2009) who found that after taking account of UK students' school attainments, that parental education had no observable effect on the likelihood of participation in higher education. Their research found that their student sample, which consisted of students considering attending university, were most strongly influenced by their ethnicity and in particular coming from an Asian heritage and their secondary schooling with those attending independent schools found to be most likely to continue onto higher education.

Of the twelve participants, six had fathers who were university educated, these were Andrew, Bala, Chai, Cham, Ernie and Khan.   Andrew, Bala, Chai and Ernie's mothers were university educated. It is interesting to note that none of the students had mothers who were university educated and fathers who were not, this is perhaps indicative of gender behaviour in a cultural context.   The table also notes the occupation of parents of ten of the twelve participants and indicates the range of occupations from managers/owners to engineers, educators and administrators.

Table 6.1: Parental occupation and higher education

Participant	Country of origin	Father's occupation	Father university educated	Mother's occupation	Mother university educated
Andrew	China	College teacher	✓	School teacher	✓
Bala	India	Retired senior railway engineer	✓	Housewife	✓
Chai	Sri Lanka	University administrator	✓	University administrator	✓
Cham	India	Retired electrical engineer	✓	Housewife	x
Ernie	China	University lecturer - history	✓	University lecturer - philosophy	✓
Hak	Libyan	Deceased	Not known	Deceased	Not known
Khan	Sri Lanka	Retired secondary school teacher	✓	Housewife	x
Meddy	China	Retired local government employee	x	Local government employee	x
Nancy	China	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Thanula	Sri Lanka	Business owner	x	Housewife	x
Vishnu	India	Business owner	x	Housewife	x
Wei	China	Factory manager	x	Factory manager	x

Five mothers were described as housewives, for example by Thanula from Sri Lanka: *"… she is traditional, you know you get married and you stay home and look after your kids"*. Khan commented on his perception that many Sri Lankan women were housewives and he recognised this was not the case in the UK: *"Sri Lanka is like for me, behind about 100 years"*. The fact that Thanula was undertaking a postgraduate qualification could be considered indicative of a potential change in attitudes towards educated women and work, although this is tempered by her parents worry about her unmarried status at the age of 25.

Despite the variation in educational experiences, all participants who were financed by their parents spoke about the support they offered. For example, Ernie noted:

"I think I come here because I get a lot of support, the support of my family"

As both of Ernie's parents were university lecturers it would be reasonable to expect that they would appreciate the value of higher education and so from a Bourdieusian perspective they would be seeking to transmit their cultural and intellectual capital to their son. My participants also appreciated the costs involved in financing their overseas education and this was sometimes regarded as a source of debt, as expressed by Ernie: *"… I will pay them* (his parents) *back of course".*

Thanula also commented on her parents' support: *"… my father will be happy wherever I go. My father's dream is to see me graduate with a PhD. My dad said he would pay for me to go wherever I wanted".* Neither of Thanula's parents were university educated and so one interpretation of their encouraging behaviour may be that by using their economic capital to enhance their daughter's prospects, they will thereby positively affect their family's social and cultural capital.

Intergenerational social mobility did not emerge as a theme from my literature review but the emphasis my participants placed on the expectations of their families' implies that an understanding of this concept is relevant to this study. A report published in 2010 by the OECD entitled Economic Policy Reform, noted the positive correlation between parental socio-economic background and their descendants' earning potential. However, the report went on to comment that it is difficult to disentangle the effect of parent's socio-economic status from that of inherited abilities or the disposition of individuals, all of which influence educational achievements and earning potential. An example of such aspirations was provided by Vishnu, he noted that despite his father running his own businesses, his father did not want Vishnu to join him: *"My dad has a business - he has a real estate business along with a brick factory that he owns … he doesn't want me to go into that business".* Vishnu went on to comment that these are dynamic markets in India and his father wanted him to have what he considered to be a more stable career.

It has already been noted that there does not appear to be any published research concerning the experiences of family members who accompany international students to the UK. However the extent to which this represents a gap in the research is difficult to determine as there does not appear to be any data to indicate the volume of international students who are accompanied by family members. The importance of non-financial support was commented on by students, such as Hak and Andrew, whose decision to study overseas had affected their immediate families. In the case of Hak, who was self-funded, he had brought his heavily pregnant wife and young daughter to the UK to accompany him: *"I have a special wife … she really support me in everything in my life so I try to support her in what she do … I am looking forward to supporting her in the future".* Although a mature student, Hak implied that he was so concerned about studying away from home that he decided to bring his family with

him for support for all the family members.   Hak's decision to share his international experience with his immediate family is likely to result in enhanced bonding capital (Putnam 1995), where shared experiences result in reinforced family relationships. The decision to bring family members will inevitably result in a different experience for both the individual concerned and their accompanying family and hence this is relevant when considering the factors which influence individual international students' experiences. At the same time this decision will also dilute a key challenge for some students which is being away from their families for extended periods while studying.

Nancy had brought her nine year old daughter but left her older sixteen year old daughter at home with her husband to continue her education, speaking here with reference to her husband, she said: *"… he was happy but he needs to take some care more of the family".* For middle aged students such as Nancy there can be the "sandwich" effect, whereby students have responsibilities in the form of both dependent children and elderly parents to consider. When asked about her parent's response to her decision to study overseas for a year, Nancy became visibly distressed and tearful: *"… they feel sad because they are old"*. Nancy's response encouraged me to reflect on how different the experience of some mature students, with family responsibilities, is to their younger, more carefree counterparts. The literature concerning international students tends to focus on their experiences in terms of differences arising from their country of origin rather than their family life cycle stage. The focus has tended to be on younger students who are experiencing transition from both a cultural and an age-related independence perspective, while little has been written about older international students, who often are at a very different stage in their family cycle and therefore have potentially different concerns and so experiences.

Both Nancy and Hak commented that having immediate family members with them had been beneficial not just to them but to those family members. In Hak's case his dentist wife had taken a course in nursery care, which was not available in Libya and she had found this very fulfilling: *"… my wife try to study the nursery now because we are really surprised – we do not have that kind of education of our own".* In the case of Nancy she felt that her daughter had: *"… made a marvellous improvement in her English and she is having a very nice life in her school"*. These two participants demonstrate that the international student experience can have a significant impact on accompanying family members with for example Hak's wife considering a new career in nursery management. When Nancy discussed her daughter's language and confidence development she commented: *"I am very surprised – my daughter is telling me that she is having SATS in her school and I say how did you do and she say oh I'm good and I say oh really you are here not that long and she says yes I am good at that – and I think she has changed".* For Hak there was also a clear sense of pride in how his four year old daughter had developed her language skills: *"I try to learn some things from her - she teach me - especially some words, she say some words like English people".*   These comments once again reinforce the development

of bonding capital as parents and their children develop skills as a result of their shared international experience (Putnam 1995).

Bala's interviews provided a different perspective on the influence of family. This was demonstrated in the context of a number of comments made in his interviews and the overall emphasis on his lack of control over his education choices. When discussing his previous tertiary education in engineering, which he described as unhappy and undistinguished, Bala commented: *"… at the time I don't have any choices … my parents wanted this for me"*.

Bala spoke at length and in detail about the role his family and in particular his mother had played in defining his life to date. Unlike the other participants, his interviews were unique in that Bala emphasised the lack of control he had over his own future. The investment of Bala's parents and in particular his mother, provided an example of what Reay (2000b) termed emotional capital. This had a clear impact on the power balance within the relationship which meant it remained a submissive child/controlling parent relationship, with all the expectations that entails, including obeying parent's wishes. When referring to studying at Midlands University Bala said: *"… they* (his parents) *are the first reason why I am here"*; and when referring to plans after completing his MBA:

" … my mother does not want me to return back home – she wants me to be here or to go to America and stay there to work – so this is what my family has planned now … after that my mother she'll want me to marry some girl and live in this country or go to America".

Such significant family influence is consistent with findings from other studies with researchers such as Abhayawansa and Fonseca (2010:539), who identified that adult children in some cultures are expected to obey the wishes of their parents and wider family. Their study of Sri Lankan accountancy undergraduates studying in Australia found that:

"Although parents did not directly put pressure on the respondents, they felt a deep obligation to live up to the parents' expectations and make them proud of their success. In addition, they had to keep face with their family, which had significantly invested in their overseas education".

Bala also highlighted this sense of duty to conform to family expectations. One of Bala's sisters lived in the US and another worked as a successful medical doctor in the UK so Bala considered that he would need to achieve overseas to make his parents proud.   The weight of conforming to his parents and in particular his mother's expectations clearly sat heavily on Bala and there was a sense of lack of control and hopelessness in some of his comments: *"I want to do something to make my mother happy but the thing is I believe that I cannot do anything to make my mother happy"*.

There are several possible explanations here, based on my extensive experience of working with international students. Firstly as Bala was in his late 20s and had yet to marry it is possible that his parents were seeking to maximise marriage opportunities through his education. This would be consistent with a perception that an international education was superior to one gained in India, particularly as Bala's previous qualifications would limit his access to the highest ranking Indian HEIs. This would mean that Bala's parents' investment in their son's education was directly linked to value maximisation, not only in relation to future earning potential but also linked to his marriage options. Furthermore, in the context of social capital, , it could mean that by Bala conforming to the expectations of his parents and therefore the norms of the wider society in which they live, his parent's social capital would be enhanced. By implication then they are seen as "good" parents and he is seen as a "good" son and so the identification of shared social capital within that family is strengthened (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998, Orlikowski 2002).

Expectations and fulfilling hopes was a key theme which emerged when discussing family and in particular in relation to successfully completing the MBA as a launch pad to a successful management career. This reflects the findings of Monk and Whittaker (2008) where they identified the parental expectation of some form of payback for their investment in their child's international education. This expectation is articulated by Cham who noted in his first interview:

"I want to get through the MBA with flying colours and so I am working hard for that because that is my parent's hope so I must". This is further reinforced in Cham's second interview: "*… my parents are trusting me to do the masters, they think that they are helping me, this is an investment for the future so I want to make them happy*".

The impact of changes in Chinese government policy and enhanced international educational opportunities are illustrated by Wei who commented that although his parents had no opportunity to attend university themselves: *"… they put all their hopes on me",* as he is their only child. This comment demonstrates the potentially huge pressure faced by some international students to successfully complete their course in the UK and thereby maximise their parent's economic and emotional investment on their return home. This pressure may be magnified for those students from Confucian heritage cultures where conformity is valued and particular value is placed on obedience to parents (Leana and van Buren 1999).

My participants also discussed how they thought others might perceive them when they returned home from their UK experience. This concern was identified in Cannon's research in 2000, which found that international students experience two levels of transition, one on entry to the foreign country and the second on returning to their country of origin. Ernie commented that in China it is a widely-held belief that individuals who study overseas: *" … experience something new, they will be able to tell us something new and something different and after they go back they will do things different*". While Andrew thought that family and friends would think *"… I will*

get better … more mature and more experienced". These expectations are also influenced by the experiences of students while studying at Midlands University. Khan's experiences of leaving home, living independently, being successful in his academic work and undertaking a period of teaching in a UK secondary school were all discussed with his family: *"… my mum … she is so amazed, she is like oh my goodness you are doing well over there … it's all changed so they* (his family) *will have a lot of expectations".*

Associated with expectations is the sense of responsibility, based on cultural norms, which was also evidenced in some of my interviews. Waters' (2005:359) research focused on the hereditary transmission of cultural values and educational expectations within the family: *"Providing valuable social and cultural capital, the "overseas educational experience" is a significant objective of many middle-class families".* Later in the same article Waters (2005:363) explained why an international educational experience is considered to be desirable by some families:

"…an overseas educational experience is believed to indicate (in its bearer) fluency in the English language as well as less obvious qualities, such as confidence, sociability, cosmopolitanism and possession of valuable social capital".

The next quotation suggests a gender-specific expectation in Sri Lanka, where the son is regarded as being responsible for the care of older parents as the daughter's responsibility changes upon marriage when her responsibility moves to her husband's family. Cham, who had an older, married sister and so was not an only child but an only son, provided an illustration of the responsibilities placed on sons and the anticipated outcome of investing in education: *"I am the only child so that means in our culture that we have to look after our parents because they are expecting that responsibility from me … I will have a good education to help them in the future*".

For those students who had left permanent, full time employment to return to full time study there was a sense of pride in this transition coupled with an acknowledgement of the risks being taken. The quote below illustrates the tension inherent in parents appreciating the implications of the changes taking place in the employment market as a result of globalisation factors, while at the same time holding potentially conflicting cultural values which can be regarded as risk averse. In the case of Khan's parents:

" … they were very happy that I am planning to do my masters – they were quite not sure how my – my career break – how it will affect my life because they say if I come back – will you get the same job, you know you are quite well paid now – still they were worried – leaving and all that".

Terms more frequently used when discussing financial transactions were used by some participants when describing their parent's view of paying for their overseas education. Cham noted: *"…as my father says … any money you spend on education is an investment – it can earn more money*". This is an apt illustration of Baruch and

Leeming's (2001) research finding concerning the expected transference of economic capital, in the form of the finance required to undertake international study, to market value in the form of a recognised qualification which is considered likely to enhance employment and thus earning potential. Chai also used the term investment to describe what he hoped would be one of the benefits of completing his course: *"… it is my parent's investment – I hope I will be in a good management position in a company with a good salary".*

The importance of when the international education experience took place, in the context of the student's family life cycle, was commented on by a number of my participants. These comments were made when discussing their families' expectations, in particular in relation to both the duration, and therefore cost of the course (which could be completed in 12 months at Midlands University, when some postgraduate courses required 24 months to complete). The following quotations demonstrate the importance of family cultural expectations related to marriage as a critical life incident (as identified by Reay 2004b), which needs to be completed within a set timeframe in order to comply with social and cultural norms. One interpretation of this is that for many international students, their international study experience is their first and last, potentially unique opportunity for independence from parents and spouses. Cham said: *"…my parents told me that if you can do this in a year, you need to finish this quickly".* Similarly Chai commented that his parents had said: *"… this is a time to go on, if you go on* (presumably to develop a time consuming career and family) *you cannot spend much time on higher studies".*

So the hereditary transmission of cultural capital was a major theme in my interviews and there was a sense that this was linked to important events such as marriage, as explained by Thanula. Thanula, then aged 25, noted that in her combined Indian and Sri Lankan culture there was a preferred age for marriage, which she had passed and this was clearly regarded by her family as both a priority and a critical event:

"… now you need to get married, they say already you are four years behind … they have fulfilled my dreams, it is now time to fulfil their dreams and they think that the only way for me to fulfil their dreams is for me to get married".

This perspective seems to qualify Thanula's earlier comment that her father's dream was for her to gain a PhD. It is interesting to note that Thanula's comment was predictive as she was married, by arrangement by her parents, before completing her MBA at Midlands University. Similarly with Vishnu's parents, they wanted their son to compete his overseas study while still in the early stages of his career: *"… (his parents) wanted me to come here as quickly as possible because there is a saying in India – once you see some money you will not be able to study".*

Meddy's parents also appear to have had marriage plans for their daughter: *"… the time is only one year and I haven't got married yet so they decided it is a very good opportunity to go abroad at this period of time".* In a number of instances there is a level of control implied by participants who, like Vishnu here noted the support of their

parents, while at the same time indicating the expectation to adhere to their expectations, thus implying a strong level of hereditary cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Vishnu commented: *"… my parents have supported me very much … financially … mentally … they are still supporting me. I still depend on them and they force me much to do this year rather than postponing for another year"*. The way in which Khan articulated his appreciation of his parents' support is interesting in light of a potential contradiction concerning support and expectations which is further illustrated by a later comment by Khan: *"… they don't pressurise me, they just see my future, they have their own future set for us but they say it is your future and you need to take care of that"*.

Communications to enhance bonding social capital, defined by Putnam in 2000 and explained earlier, as exclusive ties of solidarity between *"people like us",* as exemplified by close-knit families, was evident as participants reported frequent verbal contact with parents and family. Frequent communication was discussed as an important factor in the first round of interviews and by the time of the second round of interviews some eight months later, contact was generally still regular but less frequent. This behaviour would suggest that while bonding social capital, in the context of family communication, is very important in the early stages, its importance diminishes as most international students develop new networks. For a number of students this was their first time away from their family home and this combined with an element of transition shock (as defined in the literature review by Bennett 1993) resulted in varying levels of homesickness. Cham found the combination of different weather and being away from home challenging: *"… these days are very cold and I miss my family"*. There was also a sense of needing to provide mutual reassurance to friends and family, as noted by Ernie*: "… to share experience, to talk to them … you need to talk to your family and your friends"*. The experience of my participants reinforces Putnam's suggestion that the development of such bonding social capital allows individuals to resolve problems, share information and build a sense of belonging. This process is critical to international students, especially in the early stages of their international experience as their sense of belonging in their new environment may need to be entirely reconstructed.

By the time of the second interview, towards the end of the second semester in May, participants generally reported a developed a sense of independence and also with that an appreciation of the contribution which their parents had made to their home life. Cham reflected on this new found independence: *"… at home I have the support of my parents, my family and friends but here I have to do everything myself"*. Thanula had also clearly reflected on her former family life: *"… my mum would do everything, I did not even wash my clothes now I think about it"*. These comments suggest that the development of inner value capital, linked to enhanced academic and life skills is evident in the form of increased independence and confidence, thus diluting the impact of transition shock over time (Boyatzis and Renio 1989). Married participants Wei, Nancy and Andrew did not see their spouses for the duration of their studies but were in daily contact and again here it is interesting to note the absence of

literature relating to the impact of international study on family members who remain in the country of origin.

For some participants the response of their family members had not always made a positive contribution to their transition. Thanula commented on how her leaving had affected her family and in particular her mother, in Sri Lanka:

 "… *my mum is a bit upset and she keeps phoning me but I tell her that I am fine and she should only call me once a week – because if she gets upset then I get upset and I want to try to manage those emotions – I don't want to get homesick".*

By the time of the second interview, however, things had clearly changed and Thanula was reassured that her mother, as a result of her encouragement and support, was engaged in an English language course at the British Council. This illustrates how both mother and daughter adopted coping mechanisms in order to try to manage their temporary separation. This experience would suggest a further aspect of transition not referred to in the literature in terms of parents' separation from their adult children. Just as with Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) recuperation model, there is likely to be a period of adjustment by parents to this change in circumstance, followed by another transition when the international student returns home.

For some participants, siblings who lived in the UK acted as surrogate parents, thereby continuing to extend cultural capital beyond national boundaries. The extent of parental control has already been discussed in some detail with respect to Bala and this control appears to have been temporarily delegated to his sister due to her proximity.   He commented*: "…my sister is the first port of call, they* (his parents) *will not call me because they think they might disturb me studying or sleeping so they will be calling my sister and then my sister will be calling me".* In Bala's case this surrogate parenting extended to controlled financial support in the form of a weekly allowance: *"I didn't work till now simply because I am lazy – I have my sister and she pays me every week so I don't have to work".* International students are more likely to come from relatively affluent families where limited demands in relation to activities related to the development of an independent lifestyle may have been made on them and this inevitably impacts on their sense of independence and personal responsibility.

Although participants were often very far away from their families, they continued to have a strong influence on them by means of regular communication, thus enhancing collective affiliation (Cerulo 1997). Family support, both emotional and often financial were critical factors in encouraging and supporting my participants to study overseas and they continued to act as a motivating factor as a result of clearly articulated and shared, inherited family and cultural expectations.

Family was important to my participants and therefore this study because it has the potential to make their experiences in the UK different. Nancy and Andrew, who left

behind spouses, children and elderly family members were inevitably likely to experience the greatest sense of emotional loss. Their experiences were contrasted by those younger participants such as Thanula and Khan who quickly engaged with a range of activities and social groups in order to reconstitute their social capital in the UK. In particular, my participant interviews demonstrated the effect of what Reay (2004) defined as emotional capital, particularly in respect of the relationship some participants, such as Bala, had with their mothers.

6.3   Globalisation challenges –
"I am a bit like a frog in a well"

My interviews illustrated the impact that globalisation, here defined in terms of the increasing economic integration of the global community, has had on international students' and their parent's decision making. The continued international expansion of western-based organisations and the increased exports from developing countries have combined to demand a highly qualified, multi-lingual and multi-cultural workforce (Marginson 2006a). The career enhancing expectation of obtaining an MBA was articulated by Bala: *"… I need an MBA to get to the next level".* This was reinforced by Cham who said: *"…you are unable to get into management without a masters".* The assumption here is that a UK awarded MBA will facilitate career development, that is to say, according to Baruch and Leeming (2001), it has a recognisable market value capital.

There is evidence of both push and pull factors affecting behaviour here. For example, a push factor for those from Sri Lanka is the limited tuition-free state provided postgraduate provision and therefore intense competition for places. Some participants were aware of the potential limitations of their often monocultural experiences, as in the case of Bala: *"I am a bit like a frog in a well"* and Cham: *"I would like to get some experience by mixing with the cultures".* For others such as Hak the reputation of the UK education system had been a motivating factor: *"… the system of UK is very, very good and that is very important".* The justification for this reputation and the associated high expectations was not identified but in Hak's case it is likely to have been Libyan friends who were completing their postgraduate studies at Midlands University, thus reinforcing the influence and value of co-national networks (*Ituma et al 2007).

A sense of difference was most noticeable amongst those participants from China, who frequently referred to their previous monocultural experiences, for example Wei: *"… you know in China … we have the same culture and we know each other better – here* (in the UK) *it is very different".* This could be interpreted as implying a preference for bonding social capital, where relationships are forged with like-minded individuals (Putnam 2000). The impact of the insider/outsider paradigm (Barbalet 1998), as discussed in chapter three and in the context of Chinese culture, is alluded to by Ernie: *"… China is quite different to the outside world so I think it's good to go outside and to know what exactly the world is".* In Ernie's second interview when asked what he thought was the most positive aspect of his experience, he replied*:*

"… the best thing is you can experience something new, you can see the outside of the world". So having been an insider, in the sense of having a shared Chinese culture, Ernie has in effect moved to having an understanding of "outside" that culture as a result of his international student experience in a multicultural environment.

This emphasis on the perceived benefits of new experiences was repeated by Bala who commented on the value of developing bridging social capital which had not previously been accessible (Putnam 2000):

"… *the best thing about being here for a year has been the opportunity to meet with China students and students of other nationalities … in India whenever I have studied, I didn't have any opportunity to meet with international students*".

Marginson's (2006a) view of the increasingly globalised higher education market was that it was one of the most international and globalised of all the social sectors and this is evidenced by the dynamic nature of international student mobility which was discussed in chapter one. Developments in this sector, in the context of cultural diversity in the classroom, were commented on by Thanula: *" … before I came I did not expect there to be so many students from different cultures here but the corridors are full of students from all over the world".* This comment once again illustrates the potential impact of the transition from a monocultural to a multicultural environment.

Another pull factor that emerged from the interviews was the prospect of gaining paid employment experience, Chai said: *"… it feels like it's a good opportunity to study here and get jobs".* Some participants were disappointed as part time work and full time post qualification employment opportunities were limited as a result of the economic recession. It should be noted that my participants were in the last cohort who could apply for a two year post graduate work visa, due to subsequent changes in regulations.

For students such as Ernie, the opportunity to experience a different, independent lifestyle was also an attractive factor: *"I think the UK universities, they accept lots of different kinds of people and allow you more freely to be the people you would like to be".* This is an interesting quote which is open to interpretation and demonstrates a missed opportunity for clarification. As Ernie was Chinese this could be a comment on the influence of a collectivist culture where there are clear norms and values linked to behavioural expectations which may result in limited personal freedom. Ernie may have found this contrasted with living in the UK, where there is a multi-cultural and more individualistic culture.

All participants came from economically developing countries and for some there was an element of self-consciousness about the implications of this. In his first interview Andrew noted that he came from a city which was well known for its successful manufacturing base but high levels of pollution: *"… it has developed so quickly and the government don't emphasise environment protection – you know this is very common in China".* At the end of his second interview when asked whether he

considered that he had a different perspective as a result of being in the UK he replied: *"I love my country but I think my hometown must change to be beautiful".* This acknowledgement of issues of concern in China such as pollution, is illustrative of how an international experience can encourage individuals to reflect. This process was defined by Ang (2004) as a form of cultural intelligence, in the sense of using knowledge of self, the social environment and information processing to better understand a culture.

This inevitable tendency to compare processes and practices in the UK with those in their country of origin raised some interesting issues with two Sri Lankan participants in particular, Thanula and Khan. They undertook a three week voluntary placement at a local secondary school with the combined aims of offering them some limited teaching practice and providing the school pupils with an opportunity to meet with international postgraduate students. Participation in this scheme demonstrates an interest in the development of cultural intelligence, as a result of gathering information from a variety of sources in an attempt to better understand a culture (Ang 2004). Khan was particularly critical of those pupils who he considered were not effectively engaging with their educational opportunities:

"… they get more than what people in other parts of the world are getting – they get free education … they get everything they want for their life but they are not making use of them – they don't appreciate it, they don't know the value of it".

Bala from India was less enthusiastic about the benefits of studying in the UK as he considered it to be a fall back option for those students who were unable to gain a place at prestigious Indian HEIs. Presumably he included himself in this category, thus reinforcing a sense of failure which was a prevalent theme in both his interviews:

"… in India it is becoming a good educational hub, there are good AITs there, good universities of management. So any graduate trying to get into a good AIT will not be trying the foreign countries or if they don't get in there, then they will be trying the foreign countries".

International career aspirations were a recurrent theme with participants hoping to be able to subsequently secure a management position in an international organisation. For many participants this had only been a consideration in the past two decades as various developing countries have encouraged international organisations to establish operations in-country to support a developing economy (Held et al 1999). Participants were confident that studying in a multicultural environment would provide them with experience which they could not have gained had they studied in their home country, as illustrated by Chai*:*

"… I learned much more things than team work because I worked in a local team in India and so when I am mingling with an international team there are many more issues come into place".

Vishnu, also from India already had work experience with an international bank and he was clear about the anticipated benefits of a UK MBA: *"… it will be very much helpful because most of the clients … from the UK and European nations, United States, Australia so we need a global culture".* Ernie considered that completing his MBA in the UK would not only enhance his English language skills but would also help him to gain employment with an international organisation. This concurs with Thomas' (2006) definition of cultural intelligence as a capability that allows individuals to understand and act appropriately across a wide range of cultures.

Khan was confident that undertaking an MBA in Sri Lanka, where his peers would have all been Sri Lankans, would not have provided him with: *"…an international approach, international exposure in the real sense … a mix of cultures would not be there".* Thanula was also confident about her enhanced employment prospects*: "I think I'll be able to get a better job and will have more knowledge of how business works in different countries".* These quotes illustrate the anticipated transformational career outcome of successful completion of a UK MBA which is indicative of the cultural value placed on the shared understanding of the value of obtaining an MBA overseas.

An exception to this internationally-focused attitude and career related expectation was demonstrated by the Peking students. They were all committed to returning to their former government positions, albeit with an enhanced international perspective. For instance Meddy when discussing the aims of the provincial government's support for students said: *"… improve the quantity and the knowledge and then we will come back and maybe have some new ideas, some creative ideas for the job – it will become better".* This concurs with Reay's (2004a) proposition that in the case of habitus, choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints that a person finds themselves in. Individuals are also circumscribed by an internalised framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable. So for the Peking students, leaving the permanent, secure employ of government was inconceivable and any alternative employment suggestion made by me was instantly dismissed. For Chinese workers, the choice of working for the government or a private organisation is a relatively recent opportunity and as such it may be some time before employees and their influential families consider privately owned organisations to be a viable alternative to local government employment.

These contrasting perspectives concerning the likely career outcomes of obtaining a UK MBA, mean that international students understand and experience the influences and impacts of globalisation in different ways. For the Peking students working in government positions they may need to develop cultural intelligence in order to work effectively with individuals and organisations who do not originate from China. For other participants the opportunity to work for an international organisation was perceived as being a preferred career option, offering more opportunities and status. For instance Thanula was clear about her intentions after completing her MBA: *"I knew that I wanted to do an international MBA because I think I will probably work for an international company when I graduate".*

146

6.4 Academic challenges

My first research aim focused on identifying those factors which contributed to international students' different experiences while studying in the UK. A range of issues have been identified in a variety of qualitative and quantitative studies located in several countries and with different student groups but the two most frequently occurring factors were the challenges posed by English language competency as well as differences in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

6.4.1 Language challenges –
"… there is not just one English language"

The challenges faced by international students as a result of living, studying and being assessed in English, as often their second or sometimes third language, have been explored in the literature review (Chen 1999; Mori 2000; Hall and Sung 2009). The extent to which actual and perceived English language competency affects the international student experience is understandably variable. By the time of the second round of interviews, Hak from Libya was clear that English language had been a major obstacle for him: *"… it is not easy to do MBA by another language; it's not my own language, so I had many barriers regarding that language".* This is reinforced by Khan: *"I find it very challenging because our mother tongue is different – that is very challenging but also it encourages us to speak, write and things like that – it is very challenging".* These experiences are consistent with the findings of researchers such as Blue in 1990 and Lacina in 2002, who found that non-native English speaking international students faced many difficulties relating to language competency in their adjustment to a UK HEI.

The participants in my study demonstrated a range of levels of verbal competence and confidence in English. For example those from India had been taught and assessed in English during their secondary and tertiary education; two of the Sri Lankan participants worked in the same English speaking organisation and Nancy from China was an English language teacher. At the other end of the spectrum others such as Hak had not undertaken any substantive English study for two decades. It is worth noting that all international students need to have achieved IELTS 6 or equivalent in order to meet the admissions requirements of the MBA at Midlands University. IELTS tests four language related skills: speaking, listening, writing and comprehension. The requirement for IELTS 6 or equivalent means that the average mark across these four areas should be 6 and thus there may be some performance deviation within the individual elements. This variation could have a significant impact on the student experience, if for example students have difficulty listening and thus comprehending lectures and communicating verbally with staff and other students (Chen1999; Mori 2000).

During their first round of interviews, the majority of participants discussed how they hoped to improve their verbal English language skills, for example Cham: *"… I'm also*

keen to improve my English and I also like to talk to other peoples because we have to communicate in English so that can help". Even those with a relatively high level of English language experience and competency anticipated the challenges of studying in an entirely English speaking environment, such as Chai: *"… I think if I listen to the accent I will be able to understand better and understand different slangs".*

International students have to manage the dual challenges of understanding colloquialisms and also interpreting a variety of accents, as commented on by Wei: *"… it is often very difficult to understand the Indians speaking English".* Although this comment from Khan would suggest a lack of self-awareness: *"… we* (those from Sri Lanka) *don't have a different accent like others have – it's more softer".* These experiences are consistent with participants in Khawaja and Stallman's 2011 study based in Australia with international students who also reported the challenges of understanding accents. The challenges presented by different accents were also commented on, for instance Andrew said: *"I like the British people's accent but for me the Indian or the Pakistani – I, it's very difficult to understand for me".* This is echoed by Nancy: *"… the Indian English here – we never got prepared for that … teachers also speak with Indian accent".*

These language challenges mean that international students can face constant communication difficulties with academic staff, other international students as well as the local community. This can result in international students seeking to minimise these opportunities for miscommunication by being drawn to friendships within their own national and therefore language group, referred to in the literature as ghettoisation (Kim 1991). Hak provided a thoughtful and reflective explanation of his perception of the challenges he faced in communicating in English:

"… there is not just one English language, there is one English language for study, and another one for the street language and one for the people from India and Pakistan, another one for the people from China – all those speak special English so I find it really difficult".

There is evidence to suggest that some participants had underestimated the subject specific intellectual demands of the MBA and this had adversely impacted on their anticipated language development. Wei for example:

"I think my expectation six months ago when I come here, I want to improve my English – including writing and spoken English but actually I have no time to study English, I have no time to study the language".

The stress of living and studying in a second language, for some international students, should not be underestimated. As noted here by Wei during his second interview, when discussing the challenges of communicating with individuals who may not have appreciated that English was his second language: *"… I think it's the hardest thing, maybe you need two or three years to have a life here, to live here – it's hard, it's very hard, very hard … maybe to live here, the language I have now is enough but*

to enjoy life here, it's not enough".   This experience is consistent with the findings of researchers such as Dao, Lee and Chang in 2007 and Sumer, Poyrazil and Grahame in 2008, who identified significant evidence demonstrating that lower levels of English proficiency are a predictor of acculturative stress and depression.It was encouraging to note that some students such as Cham, did access resources to support their English language development: *"… I try to participate in English courses; professional English and I get help in skills development at the library, so they help me to complete the assignments".*

Research has often focused particularly on Chinese students who are likely to have had less opportunity to access English language media and are thus at a potential disadvantage when compared to many other international students (Burnapp and Zhao 2011). Some of my Chinese participants commented on how they felt this differentiated Chinese students from other international students, for example Wei said*: "… there are so many ways – there are so many English companies and movies and magazines and advertisement – so many things in English but in India and Pakistan there is much in English but in China it's not – it's not".* This is reinforced by Andrew, also from China: *"… India, the people from Africa and the south of Asia they speak English in their common life … the Chinese situation is so different".*

This sense of disadvantage was identified in the literature review by Burnapp and Zhao (2011) who studied Chinese final year undergraduates. They found that students themselves identified language as being their main area of weakness and my Chinese participants made the same comments. Such perceived language limitations are likely to encourage the development of bonding capital (Putnam 2000), where international students deliberately seek out the friendship of others from similar backgrounds to develop single national enclaves which offer a network of support and shared communication (Church 1982).

My Chinese participants were conscious of their linguistic limitations, for instance Meddy said: *"… frankly speaking, we are not, we do not have very good English".* While Andrew commented that there were few opportunities for participants to speak English in China: *"… we seldom speak English in modern society, English become more and more important but in China especially persons who work for the government, they have no opportunities or time to speak English".* Overall my participants spoke of a lack of English language confidence which is likely to have had an impact on these students' experiences. A study by Barratt and Huba (1994) found that by contrast those international students' with improved English competency had increased self-esteem and positively associated their improved language skills with more interpersonal communication.

Ernie expressed guilt attached to his coping strategy of accessing learning resources in Chinese: *"… most of the time I prefer to read some information on a Chinese website, I know it is wrong because you are here to learn English. I know it is wrong but this textbook will take me much time".* So although international students can demonstrate the requisite language level for admission purposes, these quotes would

imply that this is not always sufficient in order to be able to study effectively at postgraduate level. These experiences support the findings of Vaara and Fay in 2011, who identified that an additional challenge for international students concerned the use of contemporary business related vocabulary.

Some participants, such as Thanula expressed negative perceptions concerning the language skills of Chinese students: *"I have a Chinese friend and she was completely off, she did not know a single word of English when she came here".* This is highly improbable and it would seem more likely that the Chinese student lacked confidence in her verbal English. Vishnu was more empathetic: *"… Chinese people are a little bit uncomfortable I think in English … it is a little bit tough for them".* Thanula's comment in particular could be considered to be evidence of a lack of cultural intelligence, as defined by Thomas in 2006, as a capability that allows individuals to understand and act appropriately across a wide range of cultures.

Some disappointment was expressed by participants who had hoped to have more contact with native English speakers, as they considered this engagement would improve their standard of spoken English. This is entirely consistent with a variety of research concerned with contact with host nationals, undertaken in diverse locations such as New Zealand and Canada (Zheng and Berry 1991; Berno and Ward 2003). Hak noted: *"…my speaking it has not improved because I could not find the opportunity to speak … if people want to improve their English, they have to speak to English people all day".* The perception that verbal interaction with international students had a detrimental effect on English language development was discussed by Khan: *"… you feel like your level of English is also going down".* Nancy articulated a view which indicated her perception of a hierarchy of spoken English, dependent on the speaker's country of origin: *"… most of our classmates are speaking Indian English and we don't think we will have so many chances to be together with Indians – that they will speak this kind of English – that's our disappointment".* Such experiences and perceptions would seem likely to restrict the development of bridging capital (Putnam 2000) as individuals may perceive there to be no tangible benefits related to the development of relationships outside their nationality.

Not all the comments concerning language development were negative. For Nancy and Hak, who had brought their young children with them, both were impressed and proud at how their children had developed their English language at primary school. Hak discussed his daughter's progress: *"… she teaches me – especially some words, she say some words like English people".* Similarly Nancy commented on the language development of her daughter: *"She has made a marvellous improvement in her English".* It is interesting to consider that the experience of these young children living and studying in a different language and culture may have a significant impact on them as individuals, their families and their future in an increasingly globalised world. One of the gaps identified in my study was the lack of understanding of how accompanying family members are affected by the experience of living overseas and it would be interesting to undertake a longitudinal study to better understand the impact of this experience on children.

While Smith and Khawaja (2011) found that stress is not unique to international students but rather it is experienced in some form by all university students, I did find that academic stress is likely to be intensified for international students due to the additional stressors of second language anxiety and adapting to a new environment. Language development is an organic process which requires considerable time for practice and reflection and so to expect international students to be fully operational in their second language from the first day of teaching is clearly unrealistic for some.

6.4.2 Teaching, learning and assessment experiences –
"… here they only guide us"

Just as in Guilfoyle's 2006 study of international students in Australia, my participants' past experiences actively framed their expectations about teaching. Guilfoyle's (2006:76) study found that: *"… lack of consideration for the candidate's (international postgraduate student's) learning style, past learning experiences and past status"*, were a cause for concern and had a potentially damaging effect on international students' relationships with academic staff. International students are invariably invited to engage in an induction programme which in the case of the participants in my study, lasted five days and then there is an expectation that they will have been provided with sufficient information to understand, respond and adhere to the educational practices prevalent in the UK HEI system. Such a relatively short introduction to UK higher education is unlikely to provide international students with the understanding and tools needed to adapt to a context that places a greater stress on self-directed learning, independent problem solving and critical analysis (Furnham 1997; Bruce and Brameld 1999; Smith and Smith 1999).

These previous experiences of teaching and learning could be for example highly authoritarian and didactic and so it seems inevitable that this will result in a period of transition, where international students endeavour to identify and understand the expectations being placed on them and determine how these differ from their past experiences. Furthermore, Read et al (2003) have pointed out that students do not uniformly access or experience academic culture but personality is an important influence. There is evidence of this in the responses of Thanula and Khan, who although competent English speakers, took a proactive approach to their studies and engaged in paid part time employment as well as voluntary work to maximise their experience.

An authoritarian approach is best illustrated by Ernie from China when discussing the differences in teaching styles: *"… it* (the UK academic environment) *is more freed than the teaching we have had … in the class it is more free because you are allowed to talk and do things and discussions"*. This difference is further compounded by the delivery and assessment in English as well as the move from an undergraduate to a postgraduate level. This transitional period meant that students in their second round of interviews were more confident when discussing their assessments, when compared to their first round of interviews. Chai for instance said: *"…before I didn't*

realise the mechanics of the system, but later, the second time (i.e. in the second semester) *I realised I could get much more detailed information and perfectly follow that system".* This realisation would suggest that Chai was in the adjustment stage of Oberg's (1960) recuperation model, which had taken around six months but it is apparent from other participant's interviews that the timescales for such adjustment and subsequent effective functioning were variable.

It was noted in chapter one that there are increasing numbers of international students enrolled on UK awarded degrees at international partner institutions and it may be that such an experience offers some advantage to those continuing their studies in the UK. Thanula and Cham had completed undergraduate awards franchised from a UK HEI in Sri Lanka and they felt confident about the expectations of the MBA, as noted by Thanula: *"… I am used to this sort of education. The staff are very friendly and you know you can always ask questions".* Cham also commented that he was familiar with case studies, visiting lecturers from the UK and group projects so he felt there were a number of similarities. These comments would suggest that those who consider they have some familiarity with UK teaching, learning and assessment methods are more confident about their ability to adapt to living and studying in the UK. It would be interesting to identify whether students enrolled on UK franchised awards at overseas partners, who then continue their studies onto postgraduate awards in the UK, perform any differently to those who have no such experience.

Understanding academic environments involves identifying and adhering to explicit and implied codes of practice and overall my participants indicated they found this to be problematic. For example, accurate application of a referencing protocol and plagiarism avoidance are inherently linked and for some students prove particularly challenging. My personal experience would suggest that genuine academic dishonesty is not widespread but a lack of understanding of the principles behind academic referencing is and this can lead to accusations of plagiarism. Wei clearly articulated the stress caused by the combination of such an accusation and the subsequent prolonged investigation:

"… the most terrible thing is actually in the first semester. I suffered under plagiarism, it is very horrible for me because I worked very hard … the tutor said to me you have failed because your assignment it read so good we don't think you wrote it and we need to investigate but the result is not coming now … I want to know why".

The delay in the investigation meant that Wei's result for this module had not been released and while not made public knowledge, this is likely to have been known to his peers. Results are posted on public noticeboards but only with reference to the student registration number and in the case of an investigation into alleged academic misconduct, the mark would be withheld. The uncertainty of this situation and the potential outcome was clearly a cause for considerable concern for Wei as this conflicted with one of key Confucian principles of loss of face, where failure to

conform to expectations, in the academic context meaning achieving a pass mark, can result in shame and embarrassment (Nguyen 2005).

Part of UK academic practice involves the accurate use and shared interpretation of academic language and this is something that concerned Ernie:

"… in China everything I was quite familiar with … so I was a little bit worried, so the first time I do a test, can I understand the – what the test is about … it is a worry about the question, can I you know understand the question and the requirements of the test?"

Overall my participants indicated they had taken some time to feel confident that they understood what their tutors' academic expectations were with significant differences being expressed at the start of the first semester in the first interview and at the end of the second semester when the second interviews took place. This experience concurs with Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963), theoretical framework involving culture learning models where they viewed cross-cultural adaptation as a long term, on-going learning process. Their central thesis was that to adapt, it is necessary to learn the norms and rules of the new sociocultural system. The challenge for my participants was that they were likely to only remain in the UK for twelve months and thus, as with the aforementioned Oberg recuperation model (1960), the timescales involved in this process were likely to vary considerably.

Research such as that by Evans in 2006 with international nursing students, found that diligence and hard work were the key characteristics which may have served students well in their former didactic educational culture. That culture is likely to have been heavily dependent on examination performance but that approach may not be sufficient in a more independent academic culture such as the UK where the assessment regime is likely to be more varied. Furnham (1997) found that one of the affecting factors which contributes to culture shock can be perceived differences in the values between cultures and some international students may consider these to be contradictory. For example where rote learning and repetition may have been rewarded with high marks in previous examinations, this may not be an effective strategy when assessments are seeking to ascertain knowledge combined with evidence of understanding and application. This lack of understanding of expectations was noted in Bala's first interview: *"… I'm still not sure what is expected from me to pass this course"* and later in the same interview: *"… I still don't know when it comes to exams what is expected of me".* By the time of the second interview Bala had come to the conclusion that there was a key to passing assignments which he had only recently discovered: *"… to get good marks you have to know what the tutor expects and you have to write according to their own expectations".*

Some participants, such as Thanula had learned a hard lesson as a result of their lack of appreciation of available support:

"I had gone wrong (i.e. failed an assignment) *so that is something that I took through to the second semester – to let the tutor see the work before you hand in so they can give you feedback – that is one of the biggest learnings I took to the second semester".*

Inevitable comparisons were made between past (in their country of origin) and present (in the UK as an international postgraduate student) educational experiences, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of varying levels of support provided by academic staff, as discussed by Cham: *"…they* (tutors in Sri Lanka) *are always providing the materials and teaching us what is in the materials – everything but here they only guide us".* This echoes Dalglish and Chan's 2005 findings where they identified that international students found it difficult to adjust to a more self-directed learning regime. It also highlights the potential for disparity between role identity and role expectations, as identified by Li et al (2002). This can result in conflict and negative attitudes towards the host institution when the support available is viewed as being inferior and therefore of less value, rather than different.

Some of my participants considered teaching staff at Midlands University to be less helpful than those at their previous institution. The onus on students to become adult, independent learners was sometimes perceived as being unsupportive, as commented on by Cham:

"… I think there should be some more help because … for example, some students have to work really hard at mathematics, there are things they ask for and other people tell them but the tutor cannot always help them and that's why they failed that subject".

Thanula recognised that the responsibility for performance had shifted from academic staff to students: *"… more independent learning is required here – there* (in Sri Lanka) *everything is spoon fed".* Many students had previous experience of considerably more contact hours than the twelve per week they attended on the MBA at Midlands University and it took some time, as noted by Nancy in her second interview, for students to adapt to this: *"… the class hours is too loose – not very tight, too few but gradually I think the Chinese found a way of studying with the teachers in our own time".*

This perception is consistent with Li et al's 2002 study, where it was found that those teachers, who emphasised learner autonomy and independent thinking, were viewed as abdicating their responsibilities. The Peking cohort developed a coping mechanism, by effectively extending tutor contact outside the formal lectures and tutorials, by requesting additional sessions for their group, to compensate for a perceived limited level of contact. Authors such as Smith and Smith (1999) suggest that international students can have higher expectations of performance, as a result of their parent's (or in the case of the Peking group, their employers') expectations and this could manifest itself in being more demanding of lecturer support outside class contact hours.

Hak's expectations of teaching were not always realised and this resulted in criticism: *"… many teacher don't care about the lecture … I mean they don't explain me things in the lecture".*   This reinforces the findings of Lee et al's (2002) study where some international students believed their performance was directly related to their teachers' competencies, rather than as a result of their own approach to learning. Hak also referred to this in his second interview:*" … in the UK teachers don't try to explain to you the theory – just mention the theory and some points and you need to read this theory and apply this theory – so it is completely different*". Hak's experience concurs with Monk and Whittaker's 2008 study of mature students who exhibited higher expectations of teaching and learning support when compared to their younger counterparts.

Wei also alluded to his lack of familiarity in respect of a team teaching approach*: "… I think it is interesting, it is my first time to see this sort of education and this is easy for students, I think if only one tutor is in front of the classes, maybe sometimes for students it is easy to get bored".* Khan offered a very positive view about his experience of teaching: *"… here the teachers talk about the current activities – various techniques that they use here, they are really amazing, they know about diversity and equality – we don't have that sort of thing in Sri Lanka".* Indicative of a different power distance culture in the UK is this positive comment from Meddy concerning the level of interaction between lecturers and students:

"… in China … seldom the student will say anything … but in our class if someone wants to ask a question, they can ask anytime and the teacher will answer you with patience – I think this kind of teaching is wonderful for students – active and that's a little bit different to China".

There was also praise for the tutorial system from Wei: *"… the tutorials are very good – there are very few people and they can face the tutor and they can talk very easily*". Although Ernie took a different view based on a comparison with friends still in China and demonstrating that small class sizes were valued by him:

"I think we have less time to communicate in the tutorial face to face … usually in the class there is at least 30 people … so the teacher does not have too much time for the individuals to talk. To some extent I am a little bit envious of my friends in China … they have a tutorial with their tutor and there is only three".

Billing (1998) and Ramsden (1988) found that international students valued mechanisms which clearly articulated and clarified expectations and this is endorsed by comments from Nancy, an assistant dean of English in a Chinese state university. She expressed praise for the systems and processes which she had observed, indicating that she was not only interested in the course content but also its management:

"… I am very impressed about the way that the teacher – conducting the lectures, giving out assignments and about the assignment marking and also about the organisation of the exams and also the management of the University – like the IT labs – it is very impressive for me … everything feels very well organised".

Students from India and China in particular had been assessed almost exclusively by end of semester examinations in their home countries, when discussing assessment in his first interview, Chai commented: *"… there* (India) *all the assessment is through examination – here (*at Midlands University*) the exam is only – more assessments than examination".* By the time of his second interview, Chai had had time to reflect on this difference in assessment and he commented that it was particularly difficult to adjust to a system of continuous assessment, particularly in terms of understanding different lecturer's expectations. This experience could be considered to be an example of Burgoon's (1995) findings concerning negative violations which can increase uncertainty and have unfavourable consequences. To minimise the impact of negative experiences, it is important for academic staff to identify any disparities and to explicitly articulate the rationale for a departure from international students' perceived norms and educational models.

Differing views were expressed concerning the merits of examinations and assessments. In his second interview Andrew from China reflected on the merits of assessments*: "… it's better to learn individually and for students in university they should spend more time on reading and writing".* Hak considered assessments to be more challenging: *"… an exam – it is easy because you know from where you have to start and where you have to finish. But with an assignment – you do not know from where to start and it will not be finished".* Andrew expressed concern and some confusion at the lack of consistency of expectation among academic staff: *"… it's a very big problem – every teacher have special criteria*". This contrasts with Ernie's more positive view of assessments:

"… I like assignment you know because you have plenty of time to prepare it … it is different with the assignment because before the deadline you have some good moods and some bad moods and with your assignment you can work when you have a good mood, rather than if you have a bad day you can screw it (an examination) *up".*

Khan was understandably apprehensive about completing assessments in his first interview: *"… I have never done assignments before, I have never done research and stuff …"* In the second interview, indicative of adherence to Oberg's (1960) adjustment model, Khan was much more positive and confident about his academic ability, largely as a result of his positive achievements in the first semester*: "Most of the time I am really happy, especially when I see the results I have achieved which I didn't think that I would".*

Continuous and in particular group assessment, was a new experience for many international students. Ernie summarised his perception of a key benefit and disadvantage of completing assessments in teams:

"… I really appreciate your group study – in China, in the university we don't have so much opportunity to do the group studies like here. Here you have to do work with your team mates and when I study here, to be honest, I not so get used to because something that looks simple, but when you finish with a group – different people have different opinions, it is since a little bit hard to do this kind of job but I think if you work in a company or in a business then you must learn how to do it".

Students on the MBA are expected to undertake extensive reading in their own time in order to fully engage with their various subjects. Those from a didactic background were used to having limited, directed independent reading, often as a result of intensive class contact which left little free time. This expectation presented those such as Wei with a challenge: *"… subjects are a little bit difficult and we have to read a lot for them – time is a little bit short too, so difficult to read much as the lecturers require".* This suggests that those involved in delivery to international students may need to consider adapting their expectations, at least in the early stages of an award, to take account of international students' developing cultural learning models (Paige 1993).

My participants' discussion concerning English language and teaching, learning and assessment issues would imply that they were generally unaware of and largely unprepared for the challenges of living and studying in English and the different style of teaching, learning and assessment which they experienced in the UK. This experience would suggest the need to more effectively prepare international students by clearly articulating and justifying both potential differences and expectations at a very early stage in their UK experience or perhaps in advance of their arrival.

This chapter has so far focused on the overarching and first research aim. These are closely connected, with the overarching aim seeking to understand the lived experiences of international postgraduate business students and the first aim looking to identify the factors which contribute to their different experiences. The third research aim arose largely from the interview data and is concerned with understanding how international students understand their identity in a foreign environment.

6.5   Identity –
"take away that mask and throw it out and be what you are"

The decision to study at an overseas university is one of potentially life-changing proportions by definition and inevitably there is likely to be an impact on the individual international student's sense of identity. The literature review has alluded to the complexities involved in any discussions concerning the concept of identity. Du Gay, Evans and Redman (2007) offered a helpful explanation by noting that the term

identity takes on different connotations depending upon the context within which it is deployed but one thing that is clear is that identity is increasingly regarded as contingent, fragile and incomplete and this makes it prone to reconstitution.

This explanation helps to shed light on some of the comments made by my participants, where they implied that their identities were in transition as their location and thereby environmental factors changed. For instance Bala discussed the challenges of being an international student: *"… for most people who come here it's not easy to come to a foreign country"*. Not only were some participants conscious of the differences and challenges inherent in living and studying in the UK, for example Nancy*: "… I need to follow the rules",* but they were also sensitive to the anticipated need for further change to be considered on their return to their country of origin, in order to reintegrate.

6.5.1 Identity development and culture

Prior to their experience at Midlands University, the majority of participants had little or no engagement outside their country of origin and as such they experienced varying levels of what has previously been defined in the literature review, as culture or transition shock (Bennett 1998). This shock can be further subdivided into the loss of cultural context, by living in a different environment which means differences such as climate, food, language etc. and a further loss of social context caused by the absence of family, friends and work colleagues. These losses will now be considered in the context of their impact on identity.

Vaara and Fay (2011) identified the need for international students to adjust their habitus, that is to say their internalised system of schemes for perceiving, thinking, feeling and acting, in order to meet with the expectations of a new environment.   The development of a more independent mind set was commented on by Cham when he discussed how the absence of family and an established friendship group meant that for the first time, he had to do everything himself and as a result: *"… for the first few months I struggle to change my behaviour"*. At the same time Cham acknowledged the benefits of living in a different country: *"… it's good for health and experience. You have to face these type of situations and you should be able to survive"*.   The latter comment is indicative of increased confidence and resilience development, defined by Baruch and Peiperl 2000 as key elements of inner value capital.

For my dependent participants, their identity within the family remained that of a cared for child and so the international study experience provided a unique opportunity not just for academic growth but also for personal development. This sense of new-found independence also brought some unexpected surprises to students such as Chai*: "I have just realised that I am a good cook".* While Thanula expressed some implied criticism of her parents by suggesting that they had failed to prepare her for living without them: *"… I think that it is a good thing, children should be brought up to be independent – I am only just learning how to cook".* It has been noted earlier in this chapter that the mothers of a number of participants were described by the

participants housewives and these participants' comments indicate that in many cases they had very limited experience of household activities such as budgeting, catering, laundry etc. as their mothers took responsibility for these activities.

My participants' accounts included references to self-monitoring, self-management and personal change. Those participants who expressed fewer concerns about their English language competency, indexed their self-representations to new ideas and the development of control of elements such as learning strategies and academic skills. These resulted in a growing sense of competence and confidence with change being manifestly attributed to time, as suggested by Oberg's (1960) adjustment model. In his second interview Khan discussed his motivation for adaptation: *"I am getting used to that* (time management), *I am sticking to times, I want to do stuff the way people here do"*. This quote suggests a level of understanding of expectations leading to a move from an outsider perspective to an insider one (Melucci 1996).

The next quotations suggest that stereotypical perceptions linked to age, in relation to both younger and older students, adds a further layer of complexity to the communication and relationships amongst this cohort. Like Nancy, Thanula was critical and suspicious of the ability of some international students because they were perceived to be too young:

"… you need to communicate with them (Chinese students), *we need to make them understand things … some of them are like so rigid, they are so young – some of them are just 18 or 19 – I wonder how they got into the MBA at all"*.

When I explained that all students on the MBA were at least 21, Thanula then turned her criticism onto the more mature students: *"… some of them are older but they are rigid, they don't want to be flexible"*. So Thanula believed that to be both younger and therefore less experienced and older than her and so presumably too experienced, could result in a rigid perspective which she considered to be a weakness. For some international students an element of their cultural identity will involve respect for those who are older but clearly this is not the case for all and so again there is the potential for tension.

The mobility of students from countries such as China, Korea and Japan to a more multicultural environment has been subject to research with authors such as Smith and Khawaja (2011) reporting findings that Asian students from collectivist cultures may experience difficulties when interacting with the local population. For some of my participants the combination of not being Caucasian and speaking with an accent meant that there were occasions where there was apparent miscommunication. In the case of Bala from India this was interpreted as racism which reinforced a sense of cultural distance. This is illustrated by the following quotation where Bala related an awkward situation when he had tried to tip a bar worker and she had misunderstood his intention:

"I think the joke is on me. So sometimes people look at you and do not understand what you are saying. I am very sure I was talking to them very slowly, I am very sure that if the same came out of a white person's mouth, they would have understood".

Although no interview questions sought to specifically explore racially related incidents or experiences, in the course of several interviews, in particular with Bala and Nancy, this was raised as a cause for concern. These discussions tended to be as a result of negative experiences and in the case of Nancy, in response to her concerns regarding her perceptions of the multi-cultural nature of Midlands University and its environment. Nine out of the twelve participants had not travelled outside their own country and as such their experience of multiculturalism was very limited.

While there has been some research which has focused on harassment and discrimination of international students (Klineberg and Hull in 1979; Khawaj and Stallman in 2011), I have been unable to identify any which relates specifically to the issue of racism between international students from different cultures, with researchers such as Brown and Jones (2011) focusing on the ethical responsibilities of HEIs to protect students from racism arising from interactions with the local community. Nancy expressed disappointment with the *"so-called international students"* in her class. I interpreted this as Nancy being concerned that those who spoke Indian English were in the majority with the implication being that this could adversely impact on her anticipated language development. Nancy's concern extended to the local Asian population and she implied a Peking group perspective: *"I do not have any discrimination about the Indians but we just feel we are surrounded by Indians here. Everywhere, everywhere – too many Indians here – we cannot distinguish who is from Pakistan – they are all the same".* Given that this comment comes from a mature, well-travelled, English language Chinese professor, this reveals a prejudice exposed by the multicultural composition of the student body and the wider community. In her second interview Nancy complained that the Asian students were inferior as a result of their relatively young age and so limited life and work experience: *"… we feel they are just talking but they have no idea – they can talk, they never stop, just talking but they don't give us any idea".* This quotation would imply that in addition to variables such as of country of origin and language competency, age can also be a factor which can be a cause for tension between international students.

Racially motivated incidents were spontaneously commented on by several participants and this is consistent with Scott's (1998) findings that it is not uncommon for international students to experience prejudice and discrimination. There is evidence to suggest that there is a spectrum of experiences with for example Mullins, Quintrell and Hancock's (1995) study of an Australian university finding that discrimination was considered a serious problem by 7% of international students, compared with Ward and Masgoret's 2004 study based in New Zealand where 35% of the international students questioned had experienced discrimination.

Cham had directly experienced verbal racial abuse, when he was mistaken for a Pakistani national and a vehicle he had been in was vandalised. Bala and his relatives were also subject to racial abuse and were again mistaken for Pakistani nationals. Wei alluded to difficulties experienced by black students: *"… some people come from Africa – sometimes they maybe think that people are not kind so much"*. This experience is reinforced by Vishnu from India: *"… I have heard a few of my Nigerian friends – they have experience … someone shouted get out of this country"*. In a similar vein Hak from Libya alluded to variations in responses from the local population: *"… sometimes we get old people, they are not friendly"*. Five out of the twelve participants, unprompted, referred to incidents of racial abuse and this is a worryingly high proportion, especially given the multicultural environment of Midlands University and the multicultural demographics of the city where the University is based.

Research with international students in 2003 by Hung found that there were varying perceptions between international students in relation to their cultural identity. These ranged between naïve idealisation and racist bias in western conceptions of China. Perceptions of national characteristics were revealed in several of my interviews. For example Bala from India, considered that Chinese students worked harder than others: *"… it is a hush hush thing going on and obviously a lot of Indian and Pakistani students fail the modules – they don't work hard enough like the Chinese students"*. This apparent compliment was later tempered with a less favourable comment concerning Bala's perception of the assessment completion style of Chinese students: *"…they talked to the people who studied it* (the module) *last year so they get an outline … when one student has finished their work they will tend to keep it to themselves – like it is gold"*.

On a more positive note there was evidence to suggest that the international experience had offered Vishnu from India an opportunity to review his attitude to those students from Pakistan and this is indicative of the potential value of the opportunity to develop bridging capital (Putnam 2000):

"…when we were back home we had a different view – then I met a few of my friends from the other nation (Pakistan) *– we are just the same as we were back home – it is different here – you don't have any fight … then I thought this is a political issue which is happening back home not a personal issue. So that's one good thing I think here"*.

Reflections on personal identity were commented on by several participants and these were facilitated by engagement with a variety of evaluation tools implemented in class to help students understand more about their individual learning and management styles. Cham linked this evaluation to his identity: *"I think I learned what – who I am, what are my skills, my learning styles, my communication styles … now I know who I am, my capabilities, my skills, my weaknesses"*. For some such as Ernie there was an allusion to the freedom experienced by some international students which would not return with them to their country of origin. Commenting here in respect of UK universities: *"… allow you more freely to be the people you would like*

to be". This contrasts with the findings of Cote (2006) and Eze (2011) who discussed how some individuals felt the need to supress aspects of their cultural identity in order to better integrate into a foreign environment. Here Ernie is suggesting that living in the UK has given him an opportunity to develop his identity, free from any constraints which he considered were in place in China.

For some participants their identity was linked to their previous academic and work experience, as commented by Chai: *"I am an IT guy … but I have to learn managerial skills as well for the future".* Nancy from China also defined herself as a result of her academic choices: *"…from the day I started to be an English major student, I think I am not that traditional, although I am very traditional Chinese when compared with the majority Chinese, I am not that traditional".* This last quote again alludes to the importance of national identity as discussed by Bochner (1977).

Bala took a philosophical approach to his time in the UK and used the familiar metaphor of a journey to articulate its significance. The quotation below indicates the value Bala placed on maintaining the social support networks which he has developed:

"… when I came here I was walking along a path and I'm still walking on that now and this is just like a coffee bar in between – I get my energy where I want it and now it is time for me to leave so I will leave and the friends I have made here – I will be in touch with them".

Navarro (2006) asserted that in order for habitus to change there needs to be a significant timescale involved but both the aspects and extent of change as well as the timescales involved are likely to be different for each individual. So while some participants commented on changes in their behaviour linked to their identity, others such as Cham were sceptical when asked if they thought the experience would change them: *"… you cannot change a person in just a couple of months".* There was also evidence of an active resistance to change in order to maintain loyalty to cultural heritage, as noted again by Cham: *"… we have some different kind of culture and I don't want to change that".* This phenomenon is explained in Bochner, McLeod and Lin's (1977) research which found that international students feel themselves to be under pressure from both host and co-nationals to maintain and rehearse their national identity.

Bourdieu discussed habitus as potentially generating a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action (1986). In the same text, Bourdieu defined habitus as an individual's relationship to their dominant culture which can be conveyed in a range of activities, including eating, speaking and gesturing. This perspective explains the tension experienced by Thanula as she identified cultural expectations. Thanula experienced a level of self-consciousness in relation to her verbal communication: *"… I notice that I am speaking in a lower voice this week – in Sri Lanka I speak quickly and in a loud voice but here I do not think this is ok".* Thanula

later went on to reveal: *"… it is important that you adapt so that you fit in with other students"*. It is regrettable that this comment was not explored with further discussion to determine why she considered it important to fit in. One interpretation of this experience is the potential tension between loyalty to cultural identity and pressure to adapt to a new culture and the reversal of this may be required on the return home.

The literature review considered the importance of social integration with researchers such as Chartrand writing in 1992, focusing on the relationship between social integration and academic adjustment and the correlation with psychological distress. Interestingly by the time of the second interview, Thanula's confidence appeared to have increased significantly as when she was reminded of this comment she responded:

"… now I am just being loud again because they (referring here to friends and work colleagues) *like me being loud, they say because you are small they cannot see me so at least your voice can be heard"*.

Improving internal competencies such as self-awareness and self-esteem is expected to produce tangible and intangible positive outcomes, as discussed by Baruch and Peiperl (2000) in the literature review.   In the case of Thanula, her increased confidence and so development of inner value capital, manifested itself in her communication with customers at the retail outlet where she was a supervisor. This sometimes involved potentially confrontational situations with customers who had been asked to produce identification before purchasing alcohol and initially she was concerned that she may appear: *"… unfriendly to them but then I thought no I am doing a good thing for them as well as for me, just take away that mask and throw it out and be what you are"*. So for Thanula, her confidence and so empowerment was enhanced by not supressing aspects of her personal and cultural identity.

6.5.2 Identity reconstitution

The potential tensions facing international students as they experience what Crozet et al (1999:7) in the literature review, defined as the *"third place"* was evident with some of my participants. That is to say they may not have felt they entirely belonged in the UK or in their country of origin at that point in time, as a result of their international experience and thus it could be said they have developed a temporary transitional identity. Towards the end of the second interview participants were specifically asked about their feelings regarding returning home and some of their responses revealed a tension between not wanting to leave their new environment and those social networks that had been developed and a desire to return to their homes, families and friends. This tension is succinctly expressed by Wei: *"… it's complex – happy and not happy"*. This is echoed by another Chinese student, Nancy: *"… happy and sad. I am very emotional actually* (tears in eyes). *I always imagine the day and I feel sad but at the same time I feel happy"*. These quotations highlight the challenges which some international students face as they anticipate their next transition on their return to their country of origin, families and in the case of the Peking cohort, jobs.

Hak exhibited an example of what Zembylas (2007) referred to as habitus. In this context this is where individuals have a set of embodied practices that are strongly influenced by historical, social and cultural contexts and in the case of Hak, his religious beliefs. For Hak, as a practising Muslim, there was little sense of loss: *"For me I couldn't live in the UK, no I don't think so … in my country I feel more happy about my religion".* While faith can provide individuals with a clear point of reference which can help them to withstand pressures and indeed this may offer a social network, in Hak's situation it would seem to have adversely affected his experience as he was unable to identify a place of worship and hence a community which met his expectations and replaced that which he had left behind in Libya.

As well as anticipating missing his friends in the UK, Cham felt he would miss the lifestyle he had experienced: *"… the freedom I have because I am a student".* So for many individuals the experience of being a full time student had become an integral part of their identity and as that period drew to a close, there was a sense of anticipated loss for the freedom which had been experienced with the recognition that a return to their country of origin meant reengagement with their previous life and employment and therefore a return to less personal freedom. Chai commented on the loss he anticipated at his return to a monocultural environment: *"… everywhere I go I see different people from different backgrounds and different countries so that's one thing I will be missing – a sure thing when I go back".*

The reacculturation experiences and challenges of international students on their return home was discussed in the literature review, with reference to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), who added a second U to Oberg's (1960) adjustment model. An example of this expectation of reacculturation was provided by Thanula*: "… if I go home it's going to be a shock for people – the way I am now and the way I used to be … this change could come up with some clashes".* She went on to further comment on her concerns about her return home: *"… when I go there* (Sri Lanka) *it will take some time for me to settle down – that will take a long time and also I have changed but I can't make them* (family and friends) *change, I can change – so I don't know how they will take the changes".* While at Midlands University, Thanula had become involved in representing the students' union as an environmental officer and she felt this was an interest that she would like to continue on her return home, however she was concerned about her family's response: *"… they will go no, no – it might create problems because they do not like people who bring things forward because they think it will create problems".* This expectation is a further example of where tension can arise as a result of what may be perceived as negative changes in the returning international student by their family.

For some of the Peking cohort, the loss of status experienced by being a full time student had been a challenge. Most of these students were mature, middle managers and senior communist party officials whose contribution to local government had been recognised and rewarded with a year's fully paid study in the UK. As an MBA student they had to contend with being regarded as full time international postgraduate

students who were considered as being equal to all their peers, irrespective of age, country of origin, source of funding or former employment. This disregard for status is likely to have been challenging for these individuals as one of the key principles of their Confucian heritage is linked to respect for hierarchical structures. There was a clear sense of pride expressed by the Peking students in their interviews as they had been selected and financially supported for their MBA year. This was tempered by some frustration that these differentiating factors were not acknowledged by Midlands University. Nancy discussed her perspective with the implication being that she represented the views of the Peking group:

"… when we arrive here we take our pride and honour but the Business School do not know who we are and where we are from and they take each of us as ordinary business students. They (the Peking cohort) *would like to have a little bit of privilege about things and if they don't get it they get frustrated … most of them have shown that they are a little bit better than the average Business School student because we have got the experience".*

This comment could be interpreted as a lack of appreciation of equal opportunities and equality of experience in the UK academic context. Nancy later went on to compare the experience of another Peking cohort which was simultaneously being taught in the US, where a different approach had been implemented: *"… the ones there* (in the US) *have been organised in a separate class and maybe we should have a separate class as well because we have more than twenty of us".* This comment would imply that Nancy did not consider the contribution of those international and UK students who were not in the Peking group to be of equal value.

Valued identities are noted throughout the participants' accounts from a self-manager of one's own learning, to a classroom performer, to a competent user of English. Implicated in these narratives is a consciousness about experiences and a monitoring and evaluation of change and the uptake of academic practices. Kettle (2011) noted that valued identities hinge on autonomy and self-managed learning, oral participation and personal change. Together these present a picture of a British postgraduate course that reflects discourses prioritising autonomy, critique, western-oriented knowledge, oral skills and collaborative and co-constructed learning. What is clear from my participants is that they found various aspects of their previously held beliefs and values challenged and this in turn had an impact on their perceptions of their individual identity.

This chapter of the analysis has discussed the key themes of family, globalisation, language, teaching, learning and assessment and aspects of identity. These all emerged as being of importance to the participants during the course of the interview process and so combine to form a set of variables which affect the international student experience. The next chapter will focus on the second research aim which involved a critical analysis of the most significant challenges affecting the international student transition process, using a capital framework. This chapter will move the evaluation of the interviews forward by considering how participants articulated

different forms of capital and how these were lost and gained as a result of their experience in the UK.

Chapter 7: Capital loss and acquisition

The ways in which my participants drew on ideas of capital were rooted in a sense of loss and acquisition. Bourdieu's theories about capital (1986) offer a framework to help us understand such processes of exchange, loss and acquisition. The way I have organised this discussion is to divide into cultural, social, inner value and economic areas, reflecting categories in both the literature and the experiences discussed by my participants.

7.1   Cultural capital –
"… somehow I did not fit into that"

Chapter three considered how cultural capital exists in conjunction with economic and social capital and proposed that this meant that it could not be understood in isolation and in the same way I have found it difficult to isolate cultural capital as it is an embedded thread throughout my interviews. This was illustrated in the first section of chapter six which discussed the influence of family and the value placed on education by students and their families. This hereditary transmission of cultural values within the family, as discussed by Bourdieu (1986), considered how the possession of high levels of cultural capital could enable an individual to appear more capable, and therefore by implication, more successful, than another. Thanula's father valued education and it was his dream to see his daughter graduate with a doctorate: "… *my dad said he would pay for me to go wherever I wanted*".   Thanula's parents had not been university educated and so her father's aspiration for her to continue her higher education could be interpreted as a desire to accumulate family cultural capital in order to enhance intergenerational social mobility. The cultural values of Thanula's family in respect of attitude to education does not support Li and Bray's (2000) findings that most cultural capital is possessed by those from the professional classes. Both Thanula and Vishnu's parents had not attended university but their fathers were entrepreneurs who managed their own businesses. For Thanula's parents their economic capital is being exchanged for cultural capital in the form of education and this is consistent with Desan's (2013) reminder that in Bourdieu's framework both cultural capital and social capital are convertible to economic capital and vice versa.

The acquisition of an MBA at a foreign university may be seen as a status symbol by both students and their parents and this is consistent with Shek's (2006) research where it was found that Chinese parents considered education to be a long terms investment which was essential for social mobility. I have seen evidence of this for example because of the emphasis on qualifications achieved overseas in the marriage advertisements in the Sri Lankan and Indian media. In the last chapter there was also reference to a desire to time postgraduate studies, in some cases to ensure that they are completed before marriage, which should take place by a particular age in order to meet with cultural expectations. Further examples were provided in the previous discussion of globalisation in chapter two, where reference was made to the need to develop an understanding of business from an international

perspective, as there can be a sense of isolation and inferiority attached to the knowledge and experience of business from those individuals from developing economies.

Linguistic imperialism and the connection to British power were both consequences of colonial language and education policy in India and Sri Lanka in the 19th century (Coperehewa 2011). As pointed out by historian Mendis (1956:215), British administrators in these countries: *" … were influenced by the view, held by Englishmen at the time, that oriental learning was of little value and that knowledge of English would lead to the moral and intellectual improvement of the Eastern peoples".* Thus the development and maintenance of British power was enhanced by making English the common language for administration, education and law. This legacy has resulted in the medium of delivery in schools often being English and adherence to the former O' level and A' level education system. These former colonial links with both India and Sri Lanka appear to have contributed to a positive attitude towards the UK, with for instance Chai saying: *"… I just had an opinion that British education is good".* This perspective is consistent with Rizvi's (2005) research where the term colonial imprint was used to describe how Indian values were interlaced with western ideas and this resulted in both a cultural and linguistic advantage.

The extent to which a positive view was balanced by a negative view of the education which is on offer in the country of origin is interesting. Among my participants, Bala said : *"… in India … they think that to study in developed countries is a good thing … most people are satisfied if you go to a developed country so an MBA, that's something to be proud of".* Later in the same interview he continued to comment on his perception of cultural attitudes to those who studied overseas and then returned home to India: *"… the people who go back after their education, they are a failure".* Bala's perception then was that a qualification obtained overseas was only the start of an international experience with the expectation that the sojourn would be continued to include a longer period of time overseas in employment or as in the case of his sisters based in the UK and US, more long term emigration based on employment opportunities.

Ong and Ward (2005) identified that the need to learn about negotiating a new culture was a core and pervasive component of the international student experience. My experience of working with Chinese students suggests that they have largely positive perceptions of the UK and are interested in enhancing their understanding of British culture. Their perceptions are often linked to their limited experience, in particular of English literature and an interpretation of British history. In his second interview Wei expressed a rather nostalgic view, perhaps based on Chinese media representation of the UK: *"… the history of Europe – I am more interested in it, before I didn't care… I want to know the UK in my heart – the UK is a legend*". Again in his second interview Wei expressed his admiration for the UK: *"… society here – everything here very advanced, very scientific … from people to the buildings, , everything".* International students' perception of their country of origin being less developed was also articulated by for example Khan from Sri Lanka: *"… they* (the UK) *are far beyond*

us in the use of technology and respecting each other". The concept of insider/outsider (Melucci 1996) was discussed in the literature review as affecting in particular those international students from cultures which differ significantly from the culture being visited and this helps to explain the perceived positive aspects of UK life which some of my participants have highlighted. The identification of these differences is likely to contribute to the challenges which international students face by encouraging them to reflect on perceived deficits in their own culture.

Oberg (1960) referred to the experience of an unfamiliar culture with a different set of behavioural standards, new institutions and rules, a foreign language and an unfamiliar natural environment, as culture shock. Such differences were noted by my participants as a result of comparing previous experiences in their countries of origin to their experiences in the UK. The extent of these differences was clearly articulated by Ernie: *"… this is a totally different country because of the city, the streets, the architecture, the way people live here, their habits and the food – you know all things is different".* These differences often concerned the practical aspects of everyday living such as public transport, using credit cards and even power, as Cham said: *"… the electricity – even the pin of the plugs is also different".* Chinese students were impressed by having heating in their halls of residence as the government in China controls the availability of heating systems so not all homes are allowed to have a fixed heating source (Gardner 2013). For Khan from Sri Lanka there was a sense that there was a lot to learn about living in the UK: *"… I didn't know I need to get an NI number and I didn't know that there is a gas meter".* These constant and cumulative differences mean that international students' knowledge and understanding is being constantly challenged and developed as their cultural intelligence is enhanced as a result if their experiences (Thomas and Inkson 2004)

Food was not a subject which arose from the literature review but it was clearly important to many of my participants. Montanari (2006) argued that the cultivation, acquisition, preparation and consumption of food represents a cultural act and as such I think it is worthy of inclusion in this section. Food was an inevitable source of difference and although many familiar ingredients were available, few participants had any significant experience of catering for themselves. For instance, Ernie acknowledged the limitations of his cooking ability with different ingredients*: "… sometimes you can try a little bit of something new but sometimes we also screw up because we don't know how to do it".* Hak from Libya was unimpressed with food in the UK: *"… a lot of English people like fast food, chips, fish and chips. To be honest I find it's not a strong food culture".* Cham noticed that staffing levels in grocery retail environments were different: *"… in India there are salesmen all over the place – for every type of item there will be a salesman but here there are no salesmen at all".* When Thanula arrived in the UK on a Sunday she was in for a shock: *"… we decided to go for some lunch but everywhere was closed … everything is open in Colombo on a Sunday because that is the day when people go shopping".* These quotations suggest that it is important to help international students adjust to their new environment by advising them on where for example they can purchase food which is familiar to them.

As with food, weather was not a particular theme from my exploration of the literature but given that the majority of my participants came from regions where the weather was relatively hot most of the time, it was unsurprising that weather was mentioned in a negative context by several students. Weather plays a crucial role in cultural identity, affecting concepts of time and economic development, thus profoundly shaping cultures and so is of relevance when discussing culture. Ernie originated from Guangdong in China where temperatures range from a high of 33°c in summer to a low of 13°c in winter (Ye 2013), he commented: *"… the worst thing is maybe the weather, when it is very horrible, I just stay in my hostel with my friends".* Thanula was nostalgic about the weather in Colombo and seemed to forget the monsoon seasons: *"… Sri Lanka is always warm and sunny and I think that weather suits me".* However weather was not always discussed in a negative context, as illustrated by this comment from Hak from Libya: *"… I like the English weather because usually we have sunshine so we like the rain".* Another fan of British weather was Khan from Sri Lanka who had experienced an improvement in his health: *"… I'm used to the weather, I really like it – I have got rid of my cold, I used to have a regular cold, basically from the dust and the climate … now I don't have that problem anymore and I like it".* Acclimatising to a different weather pattern is an integral part of the international student experience and so students need to be provided with the appropriate information to help them prepare for the variability of the British seasons.

Differences related to monochronic and polychronic attitudes to time were discussed by participants. Monochronic attitudes prevail in the UK where there is an expectation that one task will be completed at a time as a result of a concentrated period within a fixed schedule as a result of planning. Countries such as India and Sri Lanka tend to be characterised by a more polychronic, or multi-active approach, where there is less emphasis on scheduling, planning for the future and punctuality and more on personal relationships and focus on the present (Lewis 2014). These differences were of interest to students such as Cham who had noticed that: *"… things are linear – you are not doing two things at the same time – you are not talking on the phone when you are doing work".* This was reinforced by Ernie who commented: *"… people here, they do the things, they do their business or they do their jobs – the attitude is quite different to China".* These observations concerning working practices are evidence of a growing understanding of different cultural behaviour (Crowne 2008) and it would be interesting to explore whether this recognition transformed into altered behaviour when these participants returned home. Any such changes in behaviour would support McLemore's (1970) research which suggested that international students can develop a new way of living which is neither characteristic of life based on the country of origin not of the dominant cultural group in the country that is being visited but rather is a hybrid of the two, defined as a third place.

Khan provided an interesting perspective of his view of this different attitude to time:

"I think that people in Sri Lanka take a relaxed attitude … very different to what I see here in the UK. I mean you are focused, you know what you want, everyone is working … you really plan … people here are more pressurised, sometimes there people are not pressurised at all. Most of the women are housewives and they don't have anything else to do".

It was noticeable that all the Sri Lankan students in the study had stay at home mothers. The latter part of this comment does demonstrate a certain naivety concerning the demands of being a stay at home mother and especially so in the case of Khan who had seven siblings.

Many participants came from densely populated cities where traffic congestion often resulted in an inevitable lack of punctuality. This was illustrated by Vishnu talking about Bangalore: *"… the average speed in a car is 12km an hour because of the traffic system",* and he commented that was not an issue in the environment around the Midlands University. Cham from Sri Lanka considered traffic management to be a positive aspect of living in the UK in contrast with his experience in Colombo: *"… in our country we waste a lot of time on our roads and so punctuality is a problem in our country".* By the time of the second interview a positive attitude to punctuality appeared to have been adopted by Cham: *"… when I have been doing group work we had some problems because people are not turning up on time and I question them about this".*

Attitudes concerning how time is spent are also culturally bound with those from China often having a keen sense of the value of their time and that of others (Lewis 2014). This is illustrated by Chinese student Wei: *"I think that if you are busy then you will be successful".* This is an interesting comment as it implies that working for long hours is directly correlated to achievement, irrespective of what is accomplished. Even different attitudes to meal times and the inflexibility of these had an impact on group activities, as commented on by Cham: *"… the Chinese people, they want to eat at 6 o'clock and so we can't hold meetings at that time".* The attitude of these Chinese students to mealtimes suggests a lack of flexibility which reinforced Bourdieu's (1993) view that habitus consists of relatively permanent dispositions which individuals may find it difficult to change, particularly if they are part of a group where conformity is valued. Research by Smith and Khawaja (2011) found that Asian students from collectivist cultures were likely to experience difficulties when trying to make friends and interact with other international students and part of this may be as a result of adherence to cultural norms. Such behaviour is consistent with Woon's (1983) research which described a sojourner as someone who conforms to their own cultural norms as a means of resisting assimilation in a foreign environment.

Gender has been discussed in the context of sociocultural identity and my participants reflected on the gendered aspect of their identity and has an opportunity to view and review it through the lens of transposition from one culture to another (Barbarin and Jean Baptiste (2013). Gender specific expectations were discussed by both of my unmarried female participants in the context of marriage and employment.

It would appear that living in the UK had encouraged Thanula to negatively reflect on gender related cultural expectations in Sri Lanka: *"… a bad thing in my community … they still believe that you have to get married … they think that girls should talk less, not be open-minded".* This quotation supports Abhayawansa and Fonseca's 2010 research which found that Sri Lankan culture valued the influence of the family but at the same time it would suggest that Thanula was developing global cultural capital, as defined by Kim in 2011, based on her ore multicultural lifestyle while resident in the UK. While for Meddy from China her gender had been seen as a constraining factor for her parents when providing her with career advice: *"… if a girl went to another city to work for a company – maybe at the start it is difficult – there are no parents, no friends, no relatives … maybe for a boy that is different because boys are very brave and are more creative".* This last quote indicates the influence which family and society can have on a young woman's self-perception and the subsequent potential impact on her future. This influence is consistent with Samovar and Porter's 1991) findings that in high power distance cultures, such as China, each member is expected to maintain their rightful place in society, with those of higher status, such as parents, exerting power over those of lower status, such as their children.

Vishnu from India indicated that he had not been able to develop friendships with women while at home because of the constraints of his cultural background. This behaviour is an example of Barbarin and Jean-Baptiste's (2013) explanation of sociocultural identity in terms of cultural expectations of what is "good" or in this instance what may have been considered to be unacceptable. What is interesting here is that living in a different environment has affected Vishnu's behaviour and therefore sociocultural identity, so that which may have been considered "good" or "bad" in India has altered. This different perspective is illustrated by this quotation which explains how Vishnu considers gender relations to be different in the UK:

"… not that we are superior and you are inferior, like we at work we only used to talk business at work, no friendship – not much girls as friends – so probably that might change here, so the basic is no gender bias … the lady population is high and they are not from that culture which is mine so they are ready to speak and we can speak to them".

A further result of coming from densely populated, often polluted cities is the perception that the environment around Midlands University was attractive but did not always feel safe because of the lack of people on the streets. The relationship between busy streets and personal safety was commented on by Chai*: "…I could see the cars but few people – I was a little frightened".* Ernie reinforced this perception: *"… in China not like in UK there is not so many people on the streets at night – in China there is usually not so less people so actually it is safe even in the evening in the street alone".* Andrew from China also expressed concerns: *"I feel it is not comfortable … I feel not safe".* Andrew was however impressed by wildlife around the campus such as birds and urban foxes, this gave him the impression that *"… people and animals are living together very harmonious".*

I noted in chapter two that that graduates need to be knowledgeable about and open to, views that differ from their own (Louisy 2004) and this can be particularly challenging for some international students who come from mono-cultural countries. A perception of being different was commented on in particular by several of my Chinese participants. This difference was often linked to a sense of isolation, expressed using the term outside to refer to anywhere not in China, which had been the result of students having limited access to non-Chinese media, due to long-term and continued censorship by consecutive Chinese governments. This inevitably influenced these students' understanding of the world outside China.

For example when asked how his Peking government employer had helped him prepare for studying in the UK, Andrew, who worked as a business advisor, replied: *"… how to deal with some particular things, how to keep secrets of our country".* It is difficult to imagine students from other countries being concerned about such a situation. This transition from an entirely familiar environment, where everyone was considered the same i.e. monocultural to multicultural was not positively viewed by everyone. Andrew from the Peking group commented on a recent burglary in the halls of residence: *"… I feel that it's not always safe here because a lot of persons from different places – you don't know everyone".* This comment would imply that Andrew considered the multi-cultural nature of those around him to be not only unfamiliar but also potentially threatening. One interpretation of this quotation is that from Andrew's perspective, to know someone means having the same cultural background. Andrew's view is consistent with a collectivist cultural approach where the development of enclaves of co-nationals services to reinforce social capital whilst discouraging integration (Coates 2004)

The drinking culture associated with in particular UK and European students is well documented in popular media and this behaviour came as a surprise to Wei*: "… they* (students in the same halls of residence) *often have parties, often almost every night but even at 11 and 12 o'clock, I can hear the music – very strong, very heavy music".* This contrasts sharply with my experiences of Chinese halls of residence where students live in multiple occupancy bedrooms and are more reminiscent of a disciplined boarding school with strict regulations. For example alcohol is not usually available on-campus at Chinese universities and I have experienced wake up calls at 06:30 so students can attend compulsory physical exercise classes outdoors. This discussion of student behaviour in halls of residence provides an example of what Leong and Ward (2000) defined as perceived cultural distance, where significant behavioural differences are identified. When these differences are perceived negatively, the result can be dissatisfaction with host national relations which is likely to lead to increased co-national interaction, as host values are considered to be incompatible with national values and norms and are therefore rejected.

In his second interview Wei's experience of socialising with students resulted in the following description of behaviour in the students' union bar: *"… they* (other students) *are very friendly … the people here they have their own characteristics, in China people are different, maybe at a party they* (Chinese students) *are not so crazy but it*

is ok". The effects of alcohol consumption and how uncomfortable it can make those not participating feel were also noticed by Bala from India. The following quotation suggests a sense of self-awareness and desire to maintain continuality of behaviour which is consistent with Earley's 2006 research on cross cultural behaviour. Earley's research found that international students demonstrated different forms of motivation including a desire to challenge and improve themselves at one end of the spectrum and at the other there was a desire for continuality manifested by limited engagement with others. Here he observed a social event where his comments suggest he felt like an outsider:

"I went to one kitchen party and somehow I didn't enjoy that – the thing is that people get drunk and they lose their sense … it might look funny for all the people who are drunk … there was lots of jumping and shouting and somehow I did not fit into that".

A lack of experience and potential social tension related to behaviour in a multicultural environment was noted by Wei with reference to alcohol consumption in the presence of those students who did not appear to consume alcohol: *"… usually a lot of Indian people don't like drinking – I don't know why, maybe because of their religion … if sometimes, we eat together and I am drinking they maybe think oh you are drinking".* These three quotations demonstrate the challenges which some international students experience when faced with social activities involving alcohol consumption. They may face tension between their past experience, or lack of it combined with cultural norms which may not always be shared or apparent and thus facing and knowing how to respond to such situations is part of the development of cultural intelligence (Imel 2000).

For some of my participants their religious affiliation and culture were inseparable and the transition process had presented challenges in identifying and visiting places of worship. Cham had been unable to find a Hindu temple in the local area and had visited one in a city around an hour away only once. For Hak, a Muslim from Libya, he felt constrained by the perceived lack of appropriate activities for himself and his young family: *"… we do not go to the pub … we couldn't go to the swimming pool with men and women … we get bored from that".* In the previous chapter it was noted that Hak has commented that he could not live in the UK because of the cultural, faith-based differences and his inability to identify a community of faith with whom he could develop bonding capital (Putnam 2000).

International students need to not only negotiate different teaching and learning styles but they also need to work collaboratively with students from very different backgrounds. The attitudes of participants towards this challenge varied considerably. Ernie for example was very positive in his second interview about what he had gained in terms of cultural perspective:

"I think this is an amazing thing here, you can work with different kinds of person, especially the people who are going to think of things in different ways … sometimes when I was in China, I always think this is right way to think about things but here you

will find that it is not necessarily right. Sometimes it is not right or wrong, it is just different people see things in different ways – that's what I love about here".

In the case of those participants from a monocultural background, the cultural dislocation experienced in the UK is an inevitable aspect of the transition process which international students need to negotiate in order to develop an understanding of what it means to live in the UK. In the literature review it was noted that it is through communication with others that the new culture is learned and hence the importance of reconstituting social capital (Atherton 2003).

7.2   Social capital –
"… our classes are like a small world"

In the context of my research, social capital is used to refer to the various personal relationships which international students have, as set out in Woolcock's (1998:155) definition: *"encompassing the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit".* These networks may be enduring, in the case of family or established friendships based in the country of origin; they may be new relationships formed with university staff and peers; they may be based on shared interests such as sports participation or they may relate to part time work colleagues for example.

These relationships may be seen as reinforcing a sense of belonging where efforts are expended to rebuild social capital as evidenced by the findings of Vaux, Riedel and Stewart (1987). While they found that social companionship through a social group provides both a sense of belonging and social support, what I found was that individual participants had different attitudes to their social networks which reflects the variety of different theories concerning social capital.

Cham provided a sports related example of the importance of some of his relationships: *"I have a lot of friends here and I go to Midland's park and play some cricket with friends".* Khan also developed relationships through shared social activities*: "I have been outside clubbing with my friends and stuff, places I didn't think I would go so it's been really fun – out to watch football matches".* Similarly Thanula engaged with new social experiences with her new social group: *"I never used to go to disco clubs or night clubs or anything like that but I wanted to have that experience".* These positive social experiences endorse the research of Walton (1990) who found that social support can ameliorate the consequences of acculturation stress and also Bochner, McLeod and Lin's (1997) research whoch found that the function of multicultural networks is largely recreational.

At the same time, one of my participants in particular, Bala from India, described how in some cases relationships or a lack of them can reinforce a sense of isolation and disconnectedness which can exacerbate homesickness and the desire to expedite a return home, to that which is familiar and where a sense of belonging is experienced. In his first interview Bala commented on the dilemma faced by many international students when they first arrive in the UK:

"… if you go out with people then you learn a lot of things – right, so I very much would like to do that but the thing is at the end of the day I am more comfortable in my room, going there and reading my books – this is what I've been doing for the last few weeks".

In his second interview Bala reflected on the rather predictable result of this continued behaviour on his experience: *"… for some reason at different points in time I have felt really lonely".* It was unclear as to why Bala appeared to be reluctant to initiate friendships. As an Indian student there was a significant community of co-nationals on campus and as he lived in halls of residence there would have been opportunities to engage with host and international students living nearby. The literature concerning social capital has tended to focus on different forms of social capital but little has been written about those students who choose to deliberately limit their social interactions and therefore opportunities to reconstitute social capital and the associated impact this has on their experiences. Many of my participants belonged to collectivist and close-knit societies and their discussions would indicate that some were unprepared for independent living as they lacked the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to a foreign, more individualistic society.

There is an understandable tendency for international students to seek out those from their own country. In the literature review, the findings of Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) referred to this as the primary co-national network whose function is to affirm cultural identity as well as providing psychological and emotional support. This quote from Cham illustrates this point: *"I met some friends from Sri Lanka from the previous batch and he helps me a lot".* Those from the Peking cohort were unique in that they had attended pre-departure briefings together and had also travelled together, as noted by Wei: *"… we have a lot of things to talk together".* The Peking group often made representation en masse and so provide an effective example of Schwartz's (1997) assertion that groups acquire the ability to advance their interests as their social capital is combined because of their group approach. This also concurs with Leena and Van Buren (1999) who argued that such networks produce higher societal returns due to the shared identity that facilitates the achievement of collective goals, the latter being a key tenet of Confucian cultures.

For more independent participants such as Khan, there was a recognition that the international community at Midlands University presented a unique learning opportunity and this was evidenced by engagement with a wide range of individual s and activities. Ernie from China discussed how he socialised with both co-nationals and other international students: *"… sometimes I will also stay with Chinese people because actually we come from the same country and we have some food familiar … I think the most time, I prefer to spend with international* (not Chinese) *students".* Ernie's preference for developing relationships with other international students is consistent with Ong and Ward's (2005) suggestion that international students' ties with other international students are more meaningful than those with host nationals. Ernie's behaviour would also suggest that his primary network is not co-nationals, as

he has developed both bonding and bridging capital. Furthermore, Ernie's behaviour does not support Kim's (1991) suggestion that where there is a large representation on campus and a strong sub-culture, then individuals of that group are likely to be drawn to membership of it.

For those such as Hak seeking out co-nationals was not an option as he was the only student on the course from Libya. When his wife was about to give birth he was absent from class and two students made contact with him, which he regarded as evidence of their friendship: *"… really that's very, very good – I like to know people from all over the world"*. This demonstration of concern at what was a very important time for Hak, supports Vaux, Riedel and Stewart's (1987) findings concerning the importance of emotional support networks for international students. Hak was unable to develop bonding social capital with a primary co-national network to provide emotional support and so developed bridging capital which enhanced his opportunities for integration into his new community (Granovetter 2002).

The importance of faith has already been discussed in the previous section with reference to culture but it also has a social aspect. For some individuals their sense of community and identity is embedded within their faith and the inability to readily access their faith community was a cause of social dislocation for them. This is most clearly articulated by Hak, a Muslim from Libya: *"I really miss to go to the masjid … because I am Muslim we go to the masjid five times a day"*. Hak had found a small mosque in the town where he lived but it had failed to meet his expectations: *"… when you go there* (the local masjid) *you find just a few people. In my country, if you go to the masjid you will find a lot of people and at every masjid at least two or three hundred people – so I like that and really miss that"*. According to Bochner, McLeod and Lin's 1977 classic model of intercultural friendship, as discussed in the literature review, international students operate within three networks of relationships, each of which serves a particular function. For Hak, there was no primary co-national network, whose function is to affirm cultural identity and psychological and emotional support. While his international friends fulfilled the emotional support aspect, as illustrated in the previous paragraph, there was no defined co-national network to affirm cultural identity, as he had in his country of origin.

Libya is 97% Muslim (www.nationsonline.org) and the move away from this mono-faith environment to a more multi-cultural and indeed secular society was a cause of some discomfort and distress for Hak. He was concerned that in the mosque, the Koran was not read in Arabic and he was disapproving of the appearance of some of the other worshippers: *"… you find someone who put a ring in his ear – like a girl – it is completely prohibited by our religion … I don't like that, this is very important"*. One interpretation of this experience is that Hak's disappointment at not being able to identify a faith community which replicated that which he had experienced in his country of origin contributed to his desire to return home at the earliest opportunity. Brown et al's 2015 study of Muslim students also found that they were keen to reject homogenisation based on their faith.

The impact of the loss of social capital experienced by some participants in their first few weeks, especially those who were alone, was illustrated by Cham in his first interview: *"… it was too difficult – I am totally out from my family and nobody here to talk with me"*. Cham's sense of isolation was magnified by living in private accommodation with working immigrants who had limited English and so his experience may well have been different had he been located in halls of residence, with other UK and international students. This challenge of effectively starting to rebuild social capital from often no foundation was also found by Ong and Ward in their 2005 study, as discussed in the literature review. They identified that international students' previous experiences of developing friendships were found to not always be directly applicable to a new environment. In Cham's second interview it was evident that his situation had improved: *"I am staying with friends so now it is ok – now I make more friends so now it's ok with me"*. This sense of loss was also experienced by Chai: *"I could not find any friends in the first few days … it was hard for me and for two days I was homesick but now I am settled here"*. In his second interview Chai reflected on his initial challenges: *"… as it was a new place I cannot go anywhere – finding some friends – that was a big task for me"*.

These comments concerning the impact of the loss of social capital, demonstrate the importance of engaging with international students when they first arrive and facilitating their social activities until classes commence and indeed subsequently in-class (Glass and Westmont 2014). Sometimes even having other students around, for example in halls of residence, can still result in international students feeling isolated. For instance, Wei described his sense of isolation: *"I can get a partner to talk to sometimes but I am lonely – I am one person"*. For Chinese students in particular the sense of difference and apprehension concerning their move to the UK was noticeable in their first interviews. For example Andrew made a rather sweeping statement about cross cultural communication: *"… for Chinese, it is difficult to get along with other people from a different country"*. This concurs with Baruch, Bell and Gray's (2005) findings of Chinese students feeling isolated and hence having an interest in studying in a western environment in order to address a perceived deficit of understanding.

International students had quite reasonably expected there to be a significant number of UK students enrolled on their award. Several studies discussed in the literature review, such as Trice (2004) and Ward and Masgoret (2004) found that international students expected and desired frequent contact with host nationals in both academic and social settings (Dunne 2013). A number of the participants were surprised at the dearth of UK students on their award, as noted by Cham: *"I didn't think that in my batch there would be only one English person – from the UK and the others are Indian, Chinese, Pakistans – I thought the majority would be UK residents"*. Cham's expectations were consistent with Ahmad's 2006 study which found that international students wanted their classes to be more multi-cultural and were disappointed to find a large number of students from one nationality. Sakurai (2010) also found that while many international students aspired to develop friendships with domestic students, many failed to develop any friendly relations.

These comments suggest that it is important for international students to have contact and social interaction with students from the UK, as an essential aspect of their international experience as well as developing an understanding of what it means to live in the UK. My participants' comments also confirm the findings of East's (2001) study where it was found that mixing with local students was a key expectation of international students. Chai echoed Cham's disappointment: *"I expected some people from the UK also but there is only one person from the UK"*. Khan also compared his expectations with the reality: *"I expected about 50% from other nationalities because the subject I am in is international so there will be a lot of international students and there will also be some local students – this is not how it is"*. There is a sense of pride in Khan's comment: *"I have a British friend and I have been to his house, he has taken me around his home city and I have been to a lot of places"*.

My participants' inability to develop friendships with UK students on their course, as there was only one UK student enrolled on the MBA, meant that they were very limited in their ability to form what was described by Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) as a secondary host national network. The purpose of this network is to support professional and academic aspirations by providing a source of language and academic assistance, based on an understanding of the local context and so this represents a potentially significant loss of local support and information. Nancy developed a network external to Midlands University to try to compensate for limited contact with UK nationals: *"I have very little chance to talk with real British because most British people here are either Indian or Chinese so very little chances so I just try to go to the church and meet some local people there"*. The use of the term "real" is interesting here and at the time of the interview it ought to have been explored for clarification purposes. Given the overall content and tone of Nancy's interviews, one interpretation of this is that she meant white British which could be construed as racist but from Nancy's perspective she is likely to be referring to the effect of language and accent as she reported that she found some Asian accents to be difficult to understand. Nancy's experience is consistent with Dalglish and Chan's 2005 study, as discussed in the literature review, which found that international students were concerned that there were inadequate opportunities to meet with domestic students. In the UK this is especially so in relation to those students who do not drink alcohol and therefore have a social life which is not focused on venues which sell alcohol.

My participants' relationships with other international students emerged as a key theme in my research with a spectrum of positive and negative perceptions and experiences being discussed in interviews. These discussions included very positive comments, here Chai: *"… it's very good, it's very exciting"* and Wei: *"I think I like their* (other international students') *ideas, from different countries it is very good I think"*. As noted earlier in this analysis, where students have acknowledged the limitations of their cultural experiences in their country of origin, they have often appreciated the opportunity to work and socialise with others who come from an entirely different background. Bala suggested concern regarding his behaviour in a multicultural

environment, indicating a developing cultural intelligence (Imel 2000) when he commented on his sensitivity when communicating with other international students: *"I make sure that I don't step on anyone's toes".* Wei, in his early 30s, found the social space provided by the students' union to be an effective venue for making friends and this comment illustrates the challenge faced by more mature international students who may feel isolated from the wider student body as a result of their age:

"… the club … it is good, it is a good place for all the world, for all the campus students to communicate with each other. Maybe in the lecture we have no chance to communicate with each other but there it is ok and the people there is very friendly but actually most of the people in ... is more young but is ok".

For some students such as Thanula, the international experience had provided her with an opportunity to share skills with a friend who she thought needed help with her English language: *"I went back to her* (a Chinese student) *place and we did work together and I had to explain things to her then she checks with me and gradually she improves".* Such supportive behaviour may in some way compensate for the lack of a secondary host national network, as identified by Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977), given the differential English language competency between some international students.

There was also some concern regarding the negotiation of social behaviour, as commented on by Khan: *"I need to get used to this culture and how they socialise and expect me to do stuff without asking them".* Khan's awareness of differences in behaviour and his desire to understand these are indicative of a desire to adapt to a different cultural situation, as discussed by Ang et al (2004). At the other end of the spectrum there was a surprising level of naivety concerning the challenges of intercultural communication and in some cases a tone of hostility. As noted by Nancy:

"…we have been put together with kind of so-called international students, actually international – most are Asians so we are a little bit disappointed and most of our classmates are speaking Indian English … that's our disappointment".

This disparaging attitude to some fellow international students, perhaps influenced by the relative maturity of the Peking cohort when compared with the average age of early to mid-twenties for other international students, contrasts with Ahmad's 2006 findings where international students were concerned that they would have to work hard to keep up with other bright international students. Nancy's disappointment at not working alongside what she would define as international students may be related to a collectivist perspective of education. The research of Ho et al in 2004 found that in collectivist cultures, education tends to be viewed as a means of gaining prestige and joining a high status group. This hypothesis implies the need to respect and value peers so that together a high status group can be formed. Nancy's lack of respect for her peers thereby devalues the group and therefore her membership of it.

Cham from Sri Lanka provided another dimension to Nancy's experiences when he commented on the challenges he perceived when communicating with Chinese students: *"… it is difficult to understand them – you cannot even understand them".* He contrasted this with his experience of working with Indian students: *"… it is easy to work with Indians because the culture is very similar to ours".* In his first interview Khan, also from Sri Lanka, was excited at the prospect of studying in a multicultural environment: *"… there are people from China, they are bringing their thoughts and their ideas – plenty of knowledge that I can gather from having the opportunity you know to mingle with people from different cultural backgrounds".* However Khan was also concerned about working with Chinese students:

"… when you work with them (Chinese students) *they find it very difficult to talk and you find it very difficult to make them understand … you have to somehow manage to teach them and that is their habit – for them they find it hard, they talk in Chinese most of the time".*

Cham's experience concurs with Scott's (2004) assertion that the tendency for international students to create their own subcultures can inhibit the development of relationships with other nationalities and therefore restrict the development of social capital. Research undertaken by Kim in 1991 found that the development of such enclaves can result in members being perceived as being anti-social for speaking their native language and this is an implied criticism by Cham. Bala from India was more positive: *"I have some very close Chinese friends and I know how hard they work"* and later in the same interview: *"… here I made some good friends with some African students, so I made some very good friends".* Later again in his second interview, Bala dismissed the influence of cultural background on friendship development: *"… I am talking about three Chinese people who I am close with now, culture doesn't make any difference with them, they are just my friends and it doesn't matter whether they speak different languages".*

Relationships with Midlands University staff were generally discussed in positive terms with participants describing most staff as helpful and accessible, for example Andrew: *"…a lot of them are very kind – yes, a lot of them are good tutors".* The one exception was Ernie who was frustrated at having to make an appointment to meet with a tutor as this was different to his custom and practice:

"When I was in China if I wanna see a tutor I don't have to make an appointment, I just go and see him, here at first it was very frustrating because they tell you that you have to make an appointment, even if they are free at that time, they will not see you. Sometimes you will feel bad about that because it is different".

Ernie's perception is consistent with Li et al's findings (2002) where international students studying in New Zealand did not like having to make an appointment to see an academic member of staff. Furthermore, it reflects the findings of Fisher et al (2002) which identified significant differences between the expectations of teacher availability between Australian and international students, with the latter expecting

more availability. Ernie's comment would suggest that his concern lies deeper than a sense of simple etiquette. It could be related critically to intra-personal isolation, with the possibility of confusion leading to potentially adversely affected learning or it could be that Ernie equates accessibility to concepts of caring or quality as a result of his previous experiences.

In my experience, in many Chinese state universities, teaching staff are contractually compelled to live on campus and are expected to be available 24/7 to their students both in their offices and in their private accommodation. This contrasts with the UK academic practice where there is a level of formality and therefore distance and boundaries in staff student relationships. There are considerable and increasingly variable demands on academic time, which supports the implementation of an appointment system in order to maximise effective time management for both staff and students. This may appear unfriendly to those students such as Ernie, who have experience of a different practice: *"… the teachers are nice but honestly they do not have too much time … maybe they are busy with other classes … but in China the tutors are nice and if they do not have the classes they will talk to you"*. This expectation of feeling cared for is consistent with Hellsten's 2002 findings where it was found that international students equated caring with staff being available to students. Here Ernie has equated academic staff availability with their level of friendliness, rather than reflecting on different practices in different cultures as a result of different environmental factors.

Cultural and social capital is not only acquired on campus but in the context of international students, social capital extends to all those individuals with whom students have contact and the multicultural environment outside Midlands University was commented on by students such as Hak: *"… most of them* (shop owners) *are very friendly … giving respect not only to the people who live here but the people who come here from different nationalities – that's very good"*. Thanula also emphasised the importance of the local community response to international students:

"I like the environment, it's not the most happening place, it can be a quiet and boring place but the people here are quite friendly, very friendly, they care about each other and that's very important – it's a community".

Several students spent a short period of time with a host family over Christmas and this had a very positive impact on them, in the case of Wei: *"… they have a party … in the village, for their friends, about 20 people and they invited me to attend – it's very good"*. Ernie felt he: "*… was lucky to join one family, you know the local people here to see how they celebrate Christmas"*. For Andrew his most positive experience was with a host English family. These schemes are challenging to manage and resource but clearly the experience for international students can be positive and memorable in the process of contributing to their accumulation of both cultural and social capital.

The Peking cohort of four students in my sample are unique in the context of social capital as they form part of a large group of over 25 students who arrived together

and therefore they are worthy of a separate discussion. The Peking students not only lived, cooked, dined and studied together but this learning community approach, facilitated by a formal committee structure, also extended to their free time, whereby they had a schedule of locations to visit and travelled to places of interest every other weekend. My literature review included reference to the importance of "fields" (Bourdieu 1986) which are various social and institutional arenas in which individuals express and reproduce their dispositions and where they compete for the distribution of different types of capital (Gaventa 2003). Individuals often experience power differently depending on which field they are in at a given moment. The field concept helps to explain the discomfort some of these students experienced at being deprived of their former work based field and so work-based status and thus power base and also the sense of community derived from being with those with whom the context of being a Chinese national working for the Chinese government, was shared.

The Peking students effectively formed an enclave, as defined by Church (1982), where enclaves are described as functioning to reduce anxiety and stress. Enclaves achieve this by enabling traditional values and belief systems to be maintained and this in turn reduces the need for significant psychological and behavioural adjustment, despite being in a very different environment. In the case of Nancy she clearly considered this to be beneficial*: "… the good part is that we don't need to find friends, we take our friends with us here so that's easy – we don't find it that difficult to find friends around us – we are always together".* Nancy's view suggests that her social capital is the Peking cohort and thu s there is no need to look outside this group for other social networks, as he needs can be met within the group. This group of students' behaviour can be described in the context of "bonding" social capital (Putnam 2000) where there is solidarity as a result of shared backgrounds and experiences and this contrasts with the "bridging" form of social capital experienced by students such as Hak who had to engage with individuals from other backgrounds as there were no other students from his home country of Libya. Portes (1998) labels this enclave developing behaviour as a form of social capital derived from social control which means that it helps to maintain conformity to maintain the stability of the network.

Research on the previous year's Peking cohort studying at Midlands University was undertaken by Jenkins in 2008 and this concluded that national enclaves, such as that formed by the Peking students, positively discouraged integration with other nationalities. Nancy recognised that this readymade group could have disadvantages: "… *because we spend too much time together and then certainly we don't have much time for students from other nationalities or other places".* The comments made by students from the Peking cohort imply that active membership of this group was compulsory, as noted by Andrew*: "… because the government always expect us to cooking together".* The use of the term "government" is interesting here and is another example of where further probing for clarification ought to have taken place. One interpretation of this is that it refers to the group leader, most likely to be the senior party official and the student who had responsibility to monitor and manage the Peking cohort.

Later when Andrew said he considered membership of this group to be limiting and he was asked to clarify this, he commented: *"… when you do presentations and assignments you must do in the small groups with members from the Peking group because it's – some students think it's very easy to communicate – it's convenient"*. This seems to be a logical approach but there were a number of other Chinese students on the MBA and so the decision to work in groups based on membership of the Peking group does not appear to have been made only on the basis of language but was enforced on the group. On reflection it would have been interesting to try to explore the extent to which membership and contribution to this group by those in the Peking group was optional. Not only would such conformity have affected the acquisition of diverse social capital within this cohort but inevitably it would also limit their ability to develop their global cultural capital.

Melucci (1996) defined collective identity as that which enables an individual to consider themselves part of a community and as such is an apt description of the collective behaviour of the Peking cohort. As a group working under a different type of pressure to perform than other students, as a result of their government sponsorship and employer expectations, the Peking students tended to adopt a strategic approach to their relationships with staff. An example of how this was achieved was given by Nancy: *"… it was exactly one month since we arrived here and we hold a thanksgiving party, we invite our teachers from the business school to attend".* As Bourdieu (1986:9) noted: *"… the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible"*. This group decision to hold a party to which only themselves and selected teaching staff were invited as well as the weekend excursions are examples of what Petonito (2000) refers to as group activities. These activities serve to connect an individual to their group resulting in a profound sense of belonging and they constitute a source of collective action, where individual identity may be subsumed to the group. Research undertaken with chinse postgraduate students in 2008 by Jenkins concluded that Chinese students often regard social networking in the context of how relationships might be beneficial and hence their party may have served as an opportunity to develop relationships with staff who held power in relation to their grades.

It was clear from my interviews that Nancy was regarded within the Peking group, as the superior English language speaker and senior member and as such she was charged with what Bourdieu (1986) termed *plena potestas agendi et loquendi* (full power to act and speak). In this role, as effective head of the group, she was entitled to speak on behalf of the group and this form of institutionalised delegation can help to ensure the concentration of social capital, thus limiting the potential for non-conformist communication and behaviour. This concentration of relationships is likely to result in more close-knit relationships and these are more likely to produce higher societal returns in relational investments as individual goals are subordinated in the interests of the goals of the collective (Leana and van Buren 1999)

While writers such as Furnham, Bochner and Lonner (1986) have discussed the culture shock experienced by some international students, many of whom had left their home country and indeed their family home, for the first time, there was also evidence to suggest that this would be reversed by returning home, when the loss of those new friendships and the associated social capital would be felt. It was anticipated that communication would be facilitated by social media, as noted by Thanula: *"… it is going to be quite difficult to keep in contact – everyone, thanks to Facebook, it will keep all of us in contact"*. Facebook is not a social media available to the Chinese students as at the time of writing it is banned by the Chinese government and so there is a danger that Chinese students will be excluded from maintaining this form of communication with non-Chinese peers (Matthew 2014), thus affecting their ability to maintain the social capital acquired when overseas.

It would have been interesting to have maintained contact with my participants on their return to their country of origin but this was not an aim of the study, however I did ask them how they felt about the prospect of leaving the UK. This interest was influenced by the research of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), who added a second curve to Oberg's (1960) acculturation model to account for international students' reacculturation experiences on their return home. Wei was warned about the challenges of leaving the UK and student life by those who had been in the previous Peking cohort*: "… they said it is hard to leave, they love here but they have to go back and work for their government"*. Cham rather dramatically commented on the need to maintain communications on returning home: "*We are actually planning to make a yearbook – but we haven't had much time since the exams – we are working with more than 100 students from different nationalities to develop a yearbook – if we lose all those contacts there will be no meaning to coming here"*.

This last quotation supports Baruch et al's 2005 assertion that maintaining contact after graduation provides an important network which has the potential to increase both individual social capital and human capital contribution. For many international students the use of Facebook and other social media sites have transformed their ability to maintain communication on their return home.

It is clear from both the literature and my research findings that the identification and construction of new social networks and the development of cultural capital presents international students with significant challenges. Whilst for example living in halls of residence and being a confident English speaker may facilitate the development of these relationships, there are also considerable obstacles for some international students including language, the pressures of study and cultural factors such as gender and faith.

7.3   Inner value capital –
"… a kind of painful process"

Inner-value capital in the context of higher education, was defined in the literature review as the managerial competencies gained through a high sense of self-

awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence (Boyatzis and Renio 1989; Baruch and Peiperl 2000). Improving these internal competencies is expected to produce both tangible and intangible positive outcomes, with Shaikh (2004) suggesting that knowledge can be converted into value which can then be used for wealth creation. Khan provided an example of this expectation when he described how he thought that achieving the MBA in the UK would impact on his future career:

"… I would say that's a major decision (to leave work and come to the UK to study) *maybe because I feel it will certainly help me develop my knowledge and skills and the exposure for me to go forward into life … I can aim for a higher position, I can go and say I have this experience at an interview – by having an MBA, I can ask for – I can express myself".*

For Meddy from China, the experience of living in the UK was considered to be more important than the acquisition of the MBA qualification: *"… I think the most benefit is not the study, it is the study here in Britain – the most important part is the life and how to live here is the most important part and I will learn something or see something".* This suggests that Meddy's focus is less on the potential impact that the completion of an MBA might have on her market-value capital but her priority lies in developing her inner value capital in the context of the actuations of global cultural capital. The market value of obtaining an MBA has already been discussed in terms of the positive perception of employers but what Meddy was referring to here is the inner value to her in terms of what she hoped to learn not just from classes but from living in the UK (Hegarty 1996; Schofield 1996).

The first round of interviews provided evidence that a number of participants aspired to move into a middle management role and they considered that the completion of the MBA would not only provide them with the required academic qualification but also the process would help them develop a variety of skills needed for such a role. Their motivation was not only to fulfil the expectations of their family and in the case of the Peking cohort, their employers but also to successfully complete the qualification. Cham described his aspirations: *"… I want to get through the MBA with colours and so I am working hard for that".* Hak, who was self-employed, had a different motivation*: "… I would like to improve my work so that is why I am here to study and improve my work to improve my company".*

Jenkins' research in 2008, found that some international students had expectations of a transformative effect as a result of their international study. This aspiration is evidenced by Nancy, the only academic in the Peking contingent. Nancy's motivation lay in broadening her experience of higher education to help inform her practice as a university academic and manager: *"I think I will learn more … different teaching style … watch the teachers to teach because every teacher have their own advantages and I can learn from these".* There was also evidence of apprehension concerning the demands that would be placed on students while in the UK, for example Ernie: *"*
*… before went here I already expect that it would be hard, it's not like a holiday …
actually before I came here I already thought about it and it is not so simple".* These

quotations suggest that as with all forms of capital, students can have very different inner-value capital starting points which impact on their experiences and aspirations.

The transition curve, as described by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) in the literature review, focused on the challenges international students face when moving to a different culture but for many participants, the experience of living independently, away from their families was also new and challenging. Cham from Sri Lanka was in his early 20s and had never lived apart from his parents: *"I have faced everything I had to do everything by myself … I have to cook myself and I have to buy things – here it's hard"*. The responsibilities associated with living independently meant that students such as Chai were concerned about how they would manage, in his first interview he expressed his concerns: *"… the first thing is the management of time … I can keep all the things in order so I do not get confused"*. By the time of his second interview he had reflected on his experience in semester one: *"… if you had seen me in December – you would have thought what is this guy doing? Very stressed with all the work and everything"*. Chai later acknowledged that the stress was exacerbated by his poor time management: *"… we started late on our assignments, that was one of the reasons why we were stressed out. We thought that one month would be sufficient for four or five assignments but it wasn't – so we had to slog"*. Thanula also experienced stress as a result of living independently for the first time*: "… I need to do this and that – it's very complicated – in my time management I need to prioritise … now I have a plan … it has improved a lot … I plan for a month now. That's a good lesson from here"*. In my experience, many international students come from cultures where children, irrespective of their age, are unlikely to leave the family home until they marry. Furthermore, as seen by the information provided by my participants, many live in homes with full time mothers and thus they are likely to have limited experience of independent living. In the context of identify capital, these international students are not only facing challenges relating to acculturation but also a change in role, from a dependent child to an independent adult with all the responsibility that entails (Erikson 1965)

While the literature suggested that international students were likely to experience more psychological and social distress than host students (Ward 2001), I found that my participants' stress-related experiences were variable but there was a consistent link between the time they had spent in the UK and their level of acculturation. The longer my participants spent in the UK and therefore the more experienced they became, the more their confidence increased and they reported that their stress decreased or at least changed in focus. Stress, often relating to the new academic environment, was a feature in a number of interviews including that of Wei's: *"I think the six months is tired actually – so many lectures and the tutors sometimes they are very strict about the assignments and exams"*. Even those students who did not previously live with parents and had work experience found living alone and being a full time student challenging, for example Wei*: "… I must manage it myself, the time when to do exercise, when to do cooking, when to do assignments, living, reading – when I have a video with my wife, it is hard"*. Wei compared these challenges unfavourably to his previous life when he was working from eight to five with a clear

routine and his wife was responsible for their home, thus indicating a reluctance to change his habitus. This comment also resonates with the findings of Rapport and Dawson (1998) who found that with increased mobility that individuals tended to find comfort in a routine set of practices which would remind them of home, irrespective of their location. Wei later commented how despite these differences, he enjoyed the challenge of having control of and managing his time: *"… although the days is very hard but I really enjoy it. Because I have worked for about six years and every day I just work in the office, doing the work and now I get to study. In work I can't control the time"*. This quotation highlights an additional aspect of transition for some international students and that is from full time employment to full time student.

A further source of stress was discussed by several students who had been away from study for a significant period of time and this coupled with the transition from full time work to full time study, was a cause of apprehension. When discussing the gap between his last experience of full time study and the present, Andrew said:

"… not for 10 years and I am not, I am not good at study. I am not customary to study and the first semester, the lessons arrangement is so close sometimes I don't feel relaxed. I feel, I face the hard work but I think I will become better".

Hak, in his early 40s, also expressed concerns, in particular relating to his lapsed language skills: *"… to study after a long time – 1996 – I studied from that period, I have studied English language and the other materials, I am not used to study something like that"*. In his second interview, Khan reflected positively on how he had performed, despite a considerable time lapse between study periods:

"… it's been easier than I thought it would – before I didn't, I was not involved in education for quite a long time … I managed to get through all the subjects, with some distinctions and the rest of them were merit and so I am very happy about what I have achieved".

These heartfelt views demonstrate that the time between a student's last experience of full time education and their international experience is another differentiating factor amongst international students which can affect their inner-value capital and thus have an impact on their experience. My participants' discussions would suggest that while this may initially have an adverse effect on confidence, in the case of Hak for example, certainly for Khan, there was a positive aspect in that these students have work experience which may enhance their learning experience and motivation.

The impact of stress can manifest itself in a number of different ways, including mental health issues such as depression (Sumer, Poyrazil and Grahame 2008), as discussed in the literature review. Even for mature students such as Hak there were motivational challenges and moments of self-doubt: *"… I mean because sometime you feel that you have a lot of pressure, a lot of work – you can't manage this work, sometimes you start to think – why am I here – very big pressure"*. For students such as Andrew, this pressure was magnified by the acknowledgement that this was a

once in a lifetime opportunity: *"… I think it is hard work for me, it will be the most important experience for me and I hope that – I wish that I will obtain a lot in the UK"*. In Thanula's case her stress manifested itself in her physical health*: "… it* (a presentation) *was so stressful for me … the evening before I was sick – I was throwing up because of the stress… I have never been stressed that much".* These quotations suggest that the fear of failure contributed to these stressful experiences and it would have been interesting to have explored this further to identify any connections with for example identity or the expectations of self and others.

Nancy did not share this predominance of self-doubt and fear, as she considered that she and her Peking colleagues were academically excellent and it was their variable English language ability which held them back: *"… if the assignments could be done in Chinese then everybody will have perfect marks".* Such confidence is not borne out in the actual performance of the Peking students, which although commendable, could not be described as excellent, as no distinction classifications were achieved. Nancy's perspective is echoed in the findings of studies by Chen (1999) and Mori (2000) who concluded that international students may expect to perform academically as well, if not better, when compared with their previous performance in their home country. However international students' actual academic performance may be below their expectations due to acculturative stressors including studying in a second language and adapting to the new education, cultural and social environments. Castro and Rice (2003) found that Chinese and Asian American students reported high levels of maladaptive perfectionism compared to other groups and the last quote from Nancy is consistent with this finding. This means that international students who have been high achievers in their home country can have a heightened sense of maladaptive perfectionism when studying in a different language, educational system and cultural context. This tends to result in an unfavourable emphasis on the discrepancy between their previous and current academic performance.

Research has shown that students from collectivist environments, such as China where there may be only one child, can have limited skills linked to independent living and my participants emphasised the challenges inherent in living independently for the first time (Khawaja and Stallman 2011). By the time of the second round of interviews, many of the participants felt that their skills had improved and the words confidence and independence were used repeatedly. An increased sense of independence and inner-value capital was sometimes associated with developing life skills such as cooking, for example Wei said: *"… I do not cook in China in my family before. My wife does all the cooking – I never cook, never, never. Actually I do not think about the kitchen before here but now it's ok, I can cook for myself".* This quote suggests a further aspect of transition for some international students, from being a looked after child or in Wei's case, spouse, to having to undertake unfamiliar activities such as cooking and food shopping.

While some research has found that increased confidence is likely to result in positive, tangible outcomes (Boyatzis and Renio 1989), for Cham his enhanced confidence came about*: "… when I finished my assignments and did group*

presentations I felt positive". Chai had developed his academic writing style*: "… now we have confidence that we can write on something and research on something so that we can publish it and gain some knowledge".* He later went on to indicate that his results had increased his confidence and intellectual capital: *"… I did not expect that I would get good results but I found I was excited when I got the results".* Ernie also commented on an anticipated expectation of pride and personal achievement: *"… I will feel good when I learn something new and manage to survive the year".* Hak reported that his intellectual capital and confidence was enhanced by his experience:

"… I feel now that I am more confidence – before I was afraid to make my company more bigger because I didn't have the knowledge, now I find that the best thing that you have to do – to progress your business is to be confident. Now I feel more confident".

The development of inner value capital was also commented on by Thanula in terms of an anticipated increase in confidence when discussing her experience: *"… it will make me very positive and confident… I learnt here that even if I make a mistake you learn from it – that's the real learning … I know that I have good ideas".* Once again Nancy is the exception as lack of confidence does not seem to be an issue, although she anticipated that her experience would result in improvements in her career*: "I am already an excellent dean, an excellent teacher and I will be more excellent".*

The potentially transformative nature of the international student experience is further illustrated by Chai, when he discussed the challenges of living in a new environment and making new friends: *"… they were the main things that made me uncomfortable then but I came through that and I am comfortable".* Ernie also commented on his newly acquired life skills*: "… here you are quite independent, you have to travel, you have to buy things, make friends here. So a lot of things I have learned here for my life".* In his first interview, Hak outlined his philosophy concerning studying overseas:

"… I think that any student who came to the UK will try to develop himself – I mean a student who doesn't just look for a certificate – or the people who looks for the knowledge – he should try to pick any good things in the UK, so for example, I try to use a diary to make notes".

Khan also commented on his changed outlook: *"… I should be really positive about myself so it has all improved. The best time was when I got my result then I know that within me I have developed self-confidence and I am happy about it".* He later concluded: *"… when I talked about self-confidence and self-motivation and stuff like that and now I really think all of that has taught me a lot in terms of me being confident and trying to achieve – setting myself targets and so it's really been working and it has improved my confidence".*

As has already been noted, Nancy brought her nine year old daughter to live with her in the UK for a year and she commented on the transformation in her in terms of confidence when discussing her progress at school:

190

"…I say how did you do and she says oh I'm good and I say oh really you are here not that long and she says yes I am good at that and I think she has changed".

Although Nancy felt her own confidence had not been enhanced, she did consider that the experience had been beneficial in other ways*: "… I think it is a kind of painful process but when you are looking back it is still a happy process because during that process you really got to know yourself better".*

Bala once again expressed a different perspective as his expectations concerning transformation had not been fulfilled and he considered his approach to study to be unchanged by his experience*:*

"… I thought I will change – last time I was studying I was struggling to concentrate on studying, then I thought that perhaps here I'll be more sincere when I am studying but then I found that when it comes to studying – I am not that serious – it's boring – like it was before".

Although in the same interview later on he acknowledged that he was*:*

" … more aware of myself but there is still a long way to go but I am more aware of myself than I think I was nine months back and it's been a different experience, the fact that I am living in a different country. I was able to test myself in a different environment and I came to know about my faults, my flaws and everything".

Inner value capital is a difficult concept to quantify but what did emerge very clearly from the second round of interviews in particular, was that my participants generally remarked that they considered their confidence levels to be significantly increased and they expressed a deep sense of reflection and personal satisfaction.

7.4   Economic capital –
"… it is very expensive, everything is expensive because our exchange rate is not good"

As I discussed in my literature review, economic capital was defined by Bourdieu in terms of its ability to transubstantiate into other forms of capital and in particular social capital (1986). Economic capital is used to refer to a variety of factors linked to the acquisition and expenditure of money. In the context of this study it is used to refer to the financial investment with respect to education made by parents (and often the extended family), students themselves and employers (Gray 2005). The expectation is that the financial investment will result, through a process of transubstantiation, into a dividend in the form of enhanced employability, improved skills and increased lifetime earning potential.

Students in this study enrolled on the Midlands University full time MBA programme with international student tuition fees of just under £10,000. When taking travel,

accommodation and subsistence for the minimum duration of 52 weeks, this means that these international MBA students at Midlands University spent on average £20,000 each in total. With the exception of the Peking students, who were government funded and Hak who was self-funding, the remaining students in this study were financially supported by their parents.

The value in real terms of this investment varies across countries and is linked to economic factors. For example, the reported average annual salary of a Sri Lankan with an undergraduate degree in January 2015 was £8,000, so the total outlay outlined above, for a Sri Lankan student, would equate to just under three year's salary (www.averagesalarysurvey.com). To provide a context to this, the average UK undergraduate salary, sourced from the same website, was £30,400. This significant outlay was clearly a cause of concern for some parents such as Chai's: *"... they* (his parents*) were frightened they have to sponsor me again".* Later in the same interview Chai discussed the perceived potential risk which lay in leaving a secure job to undertake full time study: *"… this was a very risky thing for me because I have to leave my two years of experience there and come here to study again but I learned that we have to take risks".* Khan also left full time employment to travel to the UK to study*: "I had to convince them* (his parents) *in terms of getting this qualification is definitely – will definitely enhance my future prospects even though I take a break and then come back … it will back me up in my future career".*

A number of participants commented that the decision to study in the UK and more specifically at Midlands University was in part influenced by a consideration of the costs relating both to the tuition fees and the associated living costs. As has already been noted, Midlands University is located in an area of economic deprivation which makes it one of the most cost effective areas in the UK in terms of student accommodation and subsistence. Whilst students such as Khan had investigated the possibility of living and studying in London, he had been deterred by the high cost of capital city living: *"… it seems that it's a very busy city and very expensive*".

Nancy and Hak had brought their children with them to the UK. Nancy brought her nine year old daughter and when discussing her there was also a sense of emotional capital (Nowotny 1981), and an expectation of investing in her education and experiences, for example in her first interview: *"I think she* (Nancy's daughter) *will learn a lot here".* This is reinforced in her second interview when she confirmed her expectations: *"I got to learn a lot from her, she has made a marvellous improvement in her English and she is having a very nice life in her school".* Nancy's daughter's experience would suggest that Nancy's economic and emotional capital has been passed on from mother to child. Hak also considered that his four year old daughter had benefited from her nursery experience in the UK and he commented on how, like Nancy, he was learning from his daughter: *"… really she surprised me … sometimes she says some words that surprise me".*

While Khawaja and Stallman's 2011 study in Australia, found that international students who unsuccessfully sought part time work felt disappointed and

demoralised, some of my participants had also hoped to be able to obtain part time employment in order to contribute to their finances but the recession meant that such opportunities were limited and this had been a source of disappointment. For participants, such as Cham, this had contributed to financial hardship: *"… we have arrived in the recession period and so it is not a good time economically, and it's been hard to find any part time jobs or things like that – so we just survive".* Chai had been working as a software engineer and when he did secure some part time work, it was not what he had hoped for: *"I am working in the college now … cleaning work, very different to my career but I have to work here".*

Some students, such as those from Peking, did not need to find part time work for financial reasons but hoped to for experience, for example Wei: *"… my only purpose is to … get more knowledge about business here and about the society in the UK".* This was reinforced by Andrew: *"… I think that if I work here I will, I will, I can communicate with different people"* and also Khan: *"I might look for one* (a part time job) *because it will also help me to understand the culture and socialise".* Others such as Ernie did not actively seek part time employment for fear that it might adversely impact on their studies: *"… there was some opportunities in restaurants but I think I need time to handle the studies so finding a job is not so urgent".* Khan had also hoped to get a part time job but was only able to secure some temporary employment in a supermarket over the Christmas vacation*: "I mean it would be useful if you were able to get some more work experience, working with British people and trying to understand how real businesses work here".* These comments would suggest that some of my participants had hoped to augment their cultural adaptation (Berry 2008) through employment in an attempt to better understand their host culture as well as to contribute to their economic capital.

One student who was successful in obtaining part time employment in a local supermarket was Thanula. This is ironic, given this comment in her first interview*: "I would like to* (secure part time work) *but not just working in a supermarket or something – some of the other students do that just for money but I would like a part time job that will be useful in my career".* In fact Thanula started out working on the shop floor and was then promoted to team leader with staff management responsibilities which was supported with what she considered to be an impressive range of training courses. Another impact of the economic turbulence was currency fluctuations which meant that some international students received a decreased return on their currency. Khan considered that this development added to his financial concerns: *"… it is very expensive, everything is expensive because our exchange rate is not good – so everything seems very expensive".*

In my literature review I referred to the findings of Monk and Whittaker (2008) who identified that in the neoclassical economic paradigm, rational individuals would be expected to determine the financial costs and benefits of an activity before committing finances to that activity. In the context of my research this involves undertaking an award overseas and with the assumption that the successful completion of that award would yield the potential for significant extra earnings over a lifetime. The link

between successful completion of the MBA in the UK and the anticipation of enhanced employment prospects was clearly articulated by several participants. For example, Wei was very positive about the likely affect: *"… it's very helpful for my career I think – after all to study abroad is a very good experience for a person – not everyone has this chance – especially here in the UK"*. He went on to imply that he considered the MBA could act as a career catalyst: *"… I am very young in the job; I just need opportunities for change – now the opportunities are not coming"*. Based on the experience of previous cohorts from Peking, Nancy was convinced that the successful completion of her MBA would be career enhancing: *"… the majority of us after our graduation will be promoted … maybe definitely I will be a dean, most of us will have these kinds of chances to be promoted"*.

It is interesting to note that all my participants hoped that the key advantages of their UK educational experience would be their increased English language competency and how their international experience would be positively perceived by current and prospective employers. However those employers would be based in their country of origin and as such none of the participants had considered Marginson's (2006a) point that foreign degrees were valuable because they could be used in more than one nation to secure employment, as all my participants planned to return to their country of origin to resume their careers.

7.5   Gap and transition analysis

This chapter has illustrated the complexity, interdependentness and interconnectedness between the various forms of capital discussed by my participants. In Bourdieu's original formulation, none of the key forms of capital: cultural, social, inner-value and economic constituted capital as such but were to only be considered capital as long as they were able to be converted into other forms, through contextually constituted institutional and social mechanisms of conversion.

There is an overarching theme prevalent throughout these two analysis chapters and that is the identification and management of gaps, often linked to perceived losses and gains but also linked to expectations and subsequent reality which manifest themselves in transitional experiences. The next table illustrates this point with reference to each theme:

Table 7.1: Gap and transition analysis derived from interview evaluation

Theme	Gap analysis
Family	The temporary "loss" of the presence of family and the attempt to mitigate this by regular communication and contact with those in the country of origin, as well as any family or friends already established in the UK.
Transition	Dependence on family to independence, dependent child to independent adult.
Globalisation	The recognition of English as the language of business and the perceived need to acquire an MBA outside the country of origin in order to maximise employability opportunities in an increasingly competitive international marketplace.
Transition	The known local employment market to a less known international market.
Language	The gap between the current level of proficiency and the levels of competency required to effectively access the MBA and the level of language needed in order to be able to live, study and work in an English speaking environment.
Transition	A perception of understanding a language to the reality of studying and living in a second language.
Teaching and learning	The requirement and expectation that much former teaching and learning may no longer be considered to be valued and a transition is required to a different teaching and learning paradigm, in a relatively short timeframe.
Transition	From a full time employee to a full time student. From having an understanding of one education tradition to a recognition that another has to be understood in order to be successful.
Identity	Undertaking a period of study in a foreign university offers international students a unique, unlikely to be repeated opportunity for potential personal freedom – away from family, friends and culturally-bound expectations of behaviour (unless a member of the Peking group in which case they impose their own codes of conduct).
Transition	Losing full time employment status to become a full time student. Links to nationality and potentially never before

	experienced freedom which can challenge students to reflect on who they are and who they can be. A reverse process on their return home.
Cultural capital	The loss of elements such as shared and understood values and status which were familiar, alongside a move to a culture where individuality and personal freedom are encouraged. There is some evidence of tension in this transition as students seek to remain loyal to their past in what is often an entirely different environment.
Transition	From a position of shared understanding and so comfort to a foreign situation where knowledge and understanding needs to be acquired.
Social capital	The loss of social networks and activities and the need to rebuild these with limited cultural capital in an entirely unfamiliar environment. Social media is used extensively to maintain contacts in the country of origin and to develop new relationships. There is also loss experienced at the end of the sojourn when new relationships are left behind and effort needs to be expended to maintain them and re-establish relationships left behind in the country of origin.
Transition	From a base of established social capital to a situation where this needs to be temporarily reconstituted.
Economic capital	For many international students this concerns the uncertainty of leaving what may be secure employment and reliance on savings or financial support from family or sponsors.
Transition	Moving from financial independence to dependence with the expectation of some form of payback.
Inner value capital	The move from the familiar and safe to the entirely unfamiliar and often challenging environment of a foreign university is likely to be a transformational experience.
Transition	This can involve changes in confidence, self-esteem, independence, time management and cognitive adaptation – amongst many other factors.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1   Introduction

This thesis is grounded in the ways that the UK higher education landscape has changed over the last thirty years. International education is not just an export industry: while international students represent a significant contribution to the direct income of HEIs through tuition fees and to the wider economy, the number of international students in the UK also opens networks with people around the world and encourages greater trade, investment and research opportunities.This growth has been accompanied by an increasing awareness of the diverse range of student needs that must be identified in order to be addressed, the development of strategies to meet those needs and the conduct of research to strengthen both understanding and subsequent strategy (Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson 2010). This should stand to reason, given that international students are ethnically and culturally diverse as well as having differing demographic factors such as gender, age, stage in family life cycle, length of stay and experience different social and psychological dimensions such as social connectedness and stress management (Hendrickson et al 2011).

Addressing the lack of recognition of the diverse experiences of international students, what I hope this thesis shows is the rich understanding that can flow from starting with an assumption of the diversity rather than homogeneity of international students, through acknowledging the complexities of different variables. The complex biographical assets of age, gender, cultural background and stage in family life cycle have not always been made explicit in published research and so international students are often treated as a homogenous group. This study has highlighted the multiplicity of experiences and relationships that students bring to this stage of their lives. The ways in which social and cultural capital in particular interact and reinforce each other as part of the international student experience have been identified.

The experiences of Hak from Libya and Nancy from China illustrate the link between social and cultural capital. Hak expressed his identity in terms of his Muslim faith and his cultural capital was embedded in his wish to adhere to the tenets of his understanding of his faith. Hak had been unable to identify what he considered to be an appropriate community of faith, whose practices needed to be consistent with his values and expectations. This meant that his inability to build bonding social capital with those who he considered to be like him, meant he felt he would be unable to live in the UK as this would also affect his cultural capital: *"For me I couldn't live in the UK, no I don't think so … in my country I feel more happy about my religion".* Despite having lived and travelled overseas before, Nancy's narrative would suggest that she struggled with some aspects of living in a multi-cultural environment. As a key member of the Peking cohort she had developed strong bonding social capital with the other members, based on their shared cultural capital.

Much of what I have learned has focused on the multiple realities experienced by my participants, which reflect their varying demographics. When considering the age of

197

my participants, for example, those who were dependent on their parents were motivated by the desire to make their parents proud by successfully completing the MBA and enhancing their career prospects and thereby pay back the considerable emotional and financial investment made by their parents, with the expectation of enhanced intergenerational social mobility. By contrast the two older participants, Hak and Nancy, had brought immediate family members with them and so their experience was significantly influenced by their responsibility for their children. The two stage interview process allowed me to compare the experiences of participants within a few weeks of their arrival and then again towards the end of their course. This highlighted the impact and unique aspects of transition shock (Bennett 1998) on each participant and how these affected each individual and changed over time.

Khan's experience was interesting as he had lived away from home for his secondary schooling and he had continued to live independently whilst working and this factor made him unique amongst my participants. This experience of living apart from his parents from a young age, instilled a sense of independence and confidence in his ability to adapt to living in the UK which meant that while he acknowledged significant differences including academic expectations and climate, these were not expressed in terms of transition shock but rather in terms of the development of a hybrid identity (lewis2 005), where different perspectives could add to each other and were integrated.

When he was asked in his first interview, when he had been living in the UK for two weeks, how he felt about living and studying in the UK, he replied: *"I don't find it very challenging because I am a person who can adapt to change very quickly since I have lived away so I don't find it very difficult but others find it very difficult staying away from home, parents and things like that, I don't see that as very sad and so I can concentrate on my study".* Khan continued to be very positive about his experience in the UK and in his second interview he expressed his pride in his achievements: "*So I have developed that attitude of mind, I should be really positive about myself so it has all improved. The best time was when I got my result then I know that within me I have developed self-confidence and I am happy about it".*

The series of complex and interconnected transitions I have uncovered include moving from a monocultural (and in the case of Hak mono-faith), developing economy to a multicultural developed country as well as moving from a country where the first language was the dominant language to one where the students' second language was dominant. All but one of my participants, Eric, left full time employment, with the associated economic capital and identity related status to become a full time student. A number of my participants left the comforts of living and being cared for by their parents and spouses to being entirely independent and many found this challenging. An interesting theme which emerged from my interviews concerned inter-student relationships and the barriers and challenges which international students faced when working and socialising with other international students from different backgrounds.

The four participants from the Peking cohort provided an insight into the operations of this group of Chinese government sponsored students. Their behaviour was significantly influenced by other group members and affected all aspects of their experiences as there was a clear expectation that they would live, eat, work and socialise as a group. Group members reported on the convenience of having a ready-made social network but some remarked that it restricted their opportunities to make friends with other international students and hence develop global cultural and social capital.

In the process of seeking to understand the lived experiences of international postgraduate business students, I divided this overarching aim into three sub-aims, as discussed in chapter 4 and these will provide the framework for this chapter.

8.2   The factors which contribute to the different experiences of international students

These factors were broadly divided into the influence of family, cultural experience, previous academic experiences, personal circumstances and English language competency.

The influence of family was variable, although it was particularly strong for those participants who had been living with their parents as dependents and they will be discussed further in the next section in the context of the transmission of cultural capital. My participants reported that their parents had a variety of educational experiences but the comments made by those who discussed their parent's aspirations for them suggest that, consistent with Monk and Whittaker's (2008) neoclassical paradigm, both parents and students assumed their investment would yield long-term financial benefits. This means that while for the Peking group, their employers were recognised as a stakeholder, for those participants who were financially dependent on their parents, their financial investment resulted in them having a stake in their children's education and the family's subsequent future. This suggests then that responsibility for financing is likely to affect the international student experience. A further factor related to family which affected the experience of Hak and Nancy was their choice to bring family members with them to the UK. While this decision may have alleviated some of their concerns for the accompanying family members, it will have impacted in particular on the social aspects of their experience as both had young children.   The impact of the international student experience on both the accompanying family members and those who remain at home has been subject to very limited research (Brooks 2015).

The factors which contributed to my participants' experiences can be considered using Oberg's (1960) model of adjustment, in the context of transitional experiences, signalling a move from the familiar to the unfamiliar which may then become familiar over time as a result of a period of adjustment. This model suggested that the first stage of adjustment was characterised by an initial high on arrival. This was clearly not always the case with my participants, for example Thanula and Khan struggled to

find suitable accommodation and others such as Andrew experienced homesickness. Despite many international students having access to a plethora of international media, the reality of moving to the UK inevitably results in both anticipated (for example different weather) and unanticipated (racist) experiences and as such a period of adjustment, which may vary considerably between individuals, is to be expected. These transitional experiences can be categorised as cultural, academic, economic, personal situation and linguistic.

All of my participants came from mono-cultural backgrounds and the move to a multicultural country, city and university presented them with a range of challenges which have been discussed in the analysis. Of the twelve participants, only three had experience of travelling outside their country of origin and this is likely to have affected their ability to adapt to living in a foreign environment. For many participants one of the most significant challenges encountered was with respect to working with peers from cultures different to their own and living in a multicultural community. While a number of participants discussed their enthusiasm for working with peers from different countries, for some, their lack of multicultural experience and cultural intelligence resulted in miscommunication, suspicion, and evidence to suggest the development of enclaves and for some individuals, ethnic stereotyping and racism. The development of cross cultural relationships often involved significant effort and it was made clear that not all participants, in particular the Peking cohort, considered this was a worthwhile use of their time and energy as the benefits were not apparent.

Those participants who did actively seek relationships with students who were not their co-nationals generally reported positive benefits and the development of global cultural capital which they considered would help them when working in an international organisation in the future. The impact of globalisation on the employment market was discussed in chapter two and many participants were hopeful of gaining employment with an international organisation. It was interesting to note that those students who reported engaging in activities to proactively reconstitute their social networks, commented on the importance of these to their overall experience. These experiences support Erikson's (1965) hypothesis that a coherent sense of identity is best facilitated when an individual engges in purposeful interactions with the social environment. The developmental cultural related skills noted by my participants included understanding different levels of language, interpreting behaviour and cultural sensitivity.

Such was the impact of their multicultural experience that several participants such as Khan reported concern at their ability to adapt to a further transition experience, first identified in 1963 by Gullahorn and Gullahorn, when they returned to their former monocultural environment. This concern focused on how they would fit back into their home environment, as for some they felt that the international experience had changed them. This would suggest that some international students have developed what Lewis (2005) defined as a hybrid identity, where different perspectives derived from their country of origin and the host culture combine to support a process of cultural adaptation. At the same time some of my participants, such as Thanula

expressed concern that family, friends and employers from their home country may have developed expectations which my participants would be unable to fulfil. This suggests that an international student's attitude towards multiculturalism can have a significant impact on both their experience while an international student and also on their return home. This would imply the need for HEIs to develop strategies to help students to develop their cultural intelligence, while also working collaboratively with the wider local community to encourage acceptance and tolerance, for example by developing the family hosting experiences, based on the positive feedback of my participants.

While some of the literature suggests that many international students come from educational cultures that are more didactic, structured and hierarchical than the more individualistic western academic system, I found that my participants had to not only manage the transition from undergraduate level to postgraduate level but also simultaneously adapt their 17 or 18 years of academic experience in their country of origin, to a potentially very different and unknown set of academic expectations. The ability to identify these differences in academic cultures and expectations varied amongst my participants with those such as Khan feeling confident by the second semester. This contrasted with the experience of Wei who was facing an accusation of academic dishonesty which had a negative effect on this experience. Academic cultures are ingrained for up to 14 years of school education and for all but Khan, who did not have tertiary experience, a further three or four years at university. These international students are therefore likely find it challenging to adapt to a context that places a greater stress on self-directed learning, independent problem solving and critical analysis (Furnham 1997; Bruce and Brameld 1999; Smith 1999).

An additional factor for Hak and Nancy was the gap of almost two decades between their first degree and their international MBA experience and this was a cause of concern for Hak who worried that this gap would be a disadvantage. Some of my participants had preconceptions based on discussions with work colleagues and friends who had studied in the UK and these would appear to have been helpful in the development of realistic expectations. A further factor relating to the academic aspect of the international student experience relates to the impact of academic success. Those individuals such as Khan, whose performance exceeded their expectations were very positive about their experience: *"Most of the time I am really happy, especially when I see the results I have achieved which I didn't think that I would".*

All my participants had different personal circumstances but the factors which seemed to have the most significant impact on their experience included financial situation, status change, motivation, dependents and faith. With the exception of Ernie, who had just completed his undergraduate degree, all my participants had been in full time employment prior to enrolling on their MBA at Midlands University. The Peking cohort of Wei, Meddy, Nancy and Andrew were all local government employees and they were fully financed by their employer with a reported generous personal allowance and the promise of continued employment on their return. Of the remaining participants only Hak, whose parents were deceased, was self-funded and

so Khan, Bala, Cham, Chai, Thanula and Vishnu had all left full time employment in order to enrol on the MBA. These individuals and Ernie were financially supported by their parents. The affecting factor here relates to financial anxieties and how this impacts on the international student experience as several students expressed concerns regarding their economic status. These individuals had anticipated being able to obtain part time employment but as the recession was in progress this had not been possible for all.

This economic based transition for the non-Peking students, from the financial security of full time employment to living within limited funds with no guarantee of full time employment on completion, brought with it not only financial but also status related implications. For example, Chai had been employed as a software engineer in India and the only paid employment he could secure in the UK whilst a student was an evening, office cleaning job. The interviews would suggest that while the Peking students were not financially disadvantaged they had, at least from the perspective of those outside the group, effectively lost the status which their employment had offered them and hence the transition from manager to full time student was a cause of concern for some participants such as Nancy, here referring to the Peking cohort: *"… somehow we are excellent but it is this kind of culture difference because when we arrive here we take our pride and honour but the Business School do not know who we are and where we are from and they take each of us as ordinary business students".* This concern at a lack of recognition of employment status can be linked to the hierarchical tradition in Chinese culture where status, often linked to the attainment of a particular position within an organisation, is of significance (Lockett 1988).

The Peking cohort's motivation was driven by the expectation of their employers who anticipated a return on their investment in terms of the development of a global perspective which would inform their working practices. Hak's motivation was linked to the development of his family business, while for others such as Thanula and Khan, they hoped to secure employment in an international organisation. Bala was the exception as he indicated that he had been happy with his former employment as a supervisor in a call centre in India and his parents had strongly encouraged him to study overseas to enhance his career prospects. These students would suggest then that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation us a further factor which impacts on the international student experience.

The pen portraits in chapter 5 show that each of my participants had their own unique set of personal circumstances. Those such as Bala and Thanula reported that they were dependent on their parents for financial and emotional support, while Hak and Nancy, were married with responsibility for their children. For those participants who lived in their parents' home and relied on their parents and in particular their mothers, their experience in the UK forced them from a position of child-like dependence to a transitional stage of adult independence. This presented a range of challenges related to finance, catering and time management which have been discussed in detail in the analysis. Hak's responsibilities remained unchanged as he, his wife and

children were with him in the UK but Nancy had brought her younger nine year old daughter with her and left her older sixteen year old daughter with her husband. This decision brought a further set of family transitional experiences for each individual being separated for a year and having a change in responsibility and contact. This raised an issue which will be further explored in the section on further research as it would be interesting in the longer term, to explore Hak's and Nancy's daughters' perceptions of their transition in terms of language development and experience of living in the UK. My research identified a further personal factor affecting the experience of some international students for whom their faith and the ability to practice it was of importance. In the case of Hak, his inability to identify what he considered to be a suitable community of faith was a significant cause of cultural dislocation.

English language competency was identified as a key affecting variable for all my participants, to varying degrees. The linguistic transition for some of my participants from rarely speaking English to being required to constantly communicate, understand a variety of accents and deliver postgraduate level assessments in English, was a cause of concern for all my participants and often stress and this has been detailed in the analysis. The Chinese participants in particular were conscious of their potential to be disadvantaged because of their limited opportunities to access English language media and speak English with native speakers whiles in China. Even those individuals whose previous education and subsequent employment had involved speaking in English and who appeared very confident in their verbal English, such as Thanula and Khan from Sri Lanka, found that they had underestimated the extent to which language would affect their experience.

A number of my participants also commented on their disappointment at their limited opportunities to engage with native English speakers and they considered this had adversely affected anticipated language development. Some students had made a concerted effort to engage with non-co-nationals while for others the familiarity of working and socialising with co-nationals was preferable. For Bala in particular, his English language was linked to several examples of miscommunication and he had interpreted the outcome of these in a racist context. Both Nancy and Hak commented on how well their daughters had developed their English language and this would suggest that their daughters' experiences of education and contact with host nationals has had a positive effect not just on the children but also their parents' English language and so this is another differentiating factor. A review of the literature relating to the impact of English language competency, such as that undertaken by Zhang and Goodson in 2011, combined with my interview findings confirms that language problems can hamper the process of learning, acculturation and effective communication and this can contribute to the development of negative perceptions and experiences.

These family, cultural, academic, economic, personal and linguistic transitions were not universally experienced by all my participants. Furthermore the effects were felt not only by the individual international student but there were implications for their

family, friends, employers and the wider society to which they would return. What was clear from my research was that the international student experience is composed of a series of transitions experienced on arrival, throughout the course of the experience and indeed on-going to include return to the country of origin. This suggests that transitions are an appropriate format for considering the key factors which contribute to the individual international student experience.

8.3   The most significant challenges involved in this transition process, using a capital framework

In the course of trying to identify a suitable theoretical framework it became clear that much of the literature and my subsequent findings could be interpreted through the lens of a capital framework, as discussed by Bourdieu (1986) and subsequently revised by authors such as Baruch et al (2005), influenced by Useem and Karabel (1986). My interest in this area stemmed from exploring the relationship between various forms of identified capital and the international student experience. What was clear from my research was that my participants had different starting points in terms of the capital which they brought with them from their countries of origin and therefore inevitably the experience affected each individual differently. The key forms of capital identified through the combination of the literature review and my findings relate to cultural capital, social capital, economic capital and inner value capital.

My analysis discussed cultural capital, particularly the concept of habitus, demonstrated by participants continually comparing their past experiences with current ones. All my participants reported experiencing some form of culture shock or change overload (Hess and Linderman 2002) as they identified and addressed the challenges inherent in living and working in a foreign, multicultural environment. My discussions with Hak confirmed that faith can be a source of cultural and social capital but also the cause of alienation when a similar faith community cannot be identified. The strong presence of cultural and social capital in the participant interviews confirms them as factors which play a significant role in the international student experience. Participants reported different forms of social connection which reflects the idea that social capital takes different forms which can facilitate different types of social networks. All my participants had come from relatively monocultural countries and hence they were challenged to develop transnational social capital with their fellow international students. This thesis finds that it can be concluded that bridging and bonding social capital play a central role in the development of social capital amongst international students (Putnam 2000). The Peking group were interesting in that they made limited attempts to form bridging capital with non-Chinese students and preferred to develop strong bonding capital amongst their group which was a source of group power.

My participants demonstrated that social support either with local or co-national students appears to be an important buffer of acculturative stress, thus enhancing adaptation and warranting inclusion as a predictor variable in acculturation models.

This was particularly illustrated by Hak who was impressed when friends contacted him when he was absent from class and also Chai who commented on the value of playing cricket with friends. The importance of reconstituting social networks is consistent with Berry (2006) as well as Arends-Toth and van de Vjver's (2006) acculturation models which distinguished between social support from members of the host society and support from co-nationals, with both potentially positively impacting on psychological and sociocultural adaptation. My participants discussed the challenges of initiating friendships with those from different cultural backgrounds and their disappointment at having very limited contact with UK students.

Possible adaptations of Bourdieu's theories are suggested by this thesis. I acknowledge that the landscape of the UK in the 21st century is different to that of late 20th century France, where the French context of *grande ecoles* and their links with high positions in the professions and government, is no different to the current debate in the UK with reference to public school attendance. For example, Grice, writing in 2014, noted that 33% of MPs went to private school, compared to 7% of the public, including 52% of Conservative MPs, 41% of Liberal Democrats and 10% of Labour's. Developments in international student mobility affords us an opportunity to extend Bourdieu's theories to include consideration of the impact of significantly increased globalisation, as discussed in the second chapter, as well as intergenerational social mobility. This thesis confirms that social and cultural capitals are inter-linked in the field of higher education. Cultural capital is seen to enable bonding social capital, while social capital, through varied social networks, facilitates the development of cultural capital.

Economic capital tends to be referred to in the literature as a mechanism for transformation into other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). My research suggested that this has indeed been the experience of my participants. For example self-funded Hak hoped that the experience would help him to grow his small family business, while for the Peking cohort, they reported that their employers anticipated that they would return with an international perspective and enhanced management skills. For those participants who were financially supported by their families there was an understanding and subsequent challenge that the investment in higher education would result in improved career prospects and with that the potential for intergenerational social mobility. The exchange of economic capital in the form of parental savings into cultural capital in the form of an MBA studied overseas would further result in enhanced emotional capital, with the student understanding their obligation to repay their parents by meeting their expectations. All but the Peking group and Ernie had left full time employment to study in the UK and so the challenge they faced on their return to their country of origin was to prove that the MBA had enhanced their career prospects by developing a successful career. The extent to which the financial costs attached to studying overseas represent a significant investment, in relative economic terms, have been discussed in the analysis.

Another form of capital which was explored in this study was defined as inner value and included the managerial competencies gained through a high sense of self-

awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence (Boyatzis and Renio 1989; Baruch and Peiperl 2000).   In particular the issue of confidence arose repeatedly throughout the interviews. In particular the issue of confidence arose repeatedly throughout both sets of interviews. In the first round of interviews all participants expressed views which suggested a lack of confidence in areas such as understanding academic expectations, their ability to form multicultural friendships and the challenges related to living independently in a foreign country. By the time of the second interviews some nine months later, most participants made much more positive comments about how well they had both performed academically and successfully negotiated their living challenges, when compared to how they had felt within a few weeks of their arrival in the UK. These reported changes would suggest that as my participants' social capital was reconstructed and their cultural intelligence developed, so too was their inner value capital enhanced but this was not a quick or easy process and the time taken varied between participants.

Bourdieu's writings on cultural capital present a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible for him to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes, with the theory of cultural reproduction focusing on the link between original class membership and ultimate class membership and how that link is mediated by the educational system. Given the diverse countries of origin of my participants, I did not consider it to be appropriate to try to categorise them by social class. Indeed the relevance of social classification in developing countries is questionable as in my experience often social and political networks are of particular value. By exploring parental education and support, I sought to identify how these particular aspects of cultural capital had influenced my participants.

It is clear from both the writing of Bourdieu and my findings that cultural capital, in the form of parental support and the transmission of values which includes the importance of education, combined with economic capital, facilitates the acquisition of educational qualifications which are an important mechanism through which wealth and power may be transmitted. The return on cultural capital therefore takes the form of educational credentials and ultimately career success. Bourdieu did suggest that the importance of cultural resources had increased over time as financial barriers to educational participation had been removed in France but this is not the case in the context of international education unless alternative funding sources are accessed. The costs associated with studying in the UK, relating to visas, tuition fees and the cost of living are increasing and in the context of many countries' average incomes, are relatively high. However the income level of those individuals from developing countries who are classified as middle class, who are more likely to be university educated and therefore may have income to support their children's education, has more than doubled over the last decade and this trend is set to continue (Mead 2013).

The most significant challenges for the international students in my study can be divided into the four key forms of capital discussed in this study. In terms of social capital the key challenge related to the loss and reconstitution of their social networks and this differed depending on factors such as contact with family, English language

proficiency and the extent to which international students proactively sought to develop relationships. Cultural capital was affected by the ability and motivation of my participants to respond to various aspects of culture shock and the associated development of their cultural intelligence. The transformational potential of economic capital has been discussed in the context of investment with the challenges relating to the expectation of both tangible and intangible long term outcomes. My research has shown how inner-value capital can be affected as international students find themselves under pressure to meet the expectations of their family, friends, employers, their societies and themselves, with those who succeed noting their increased confidence as a result of their personal development.

8.4   How these international students understand their identity in a foreign learning environment

While my literature review referred to research which found that international students can experience an altered sense of identity (Church 1982; Lee 2004) as well as identity conflict (Leong and Ward 2000), my participants discussed how aspects of their identity had been challenged at various times during their UK experience. My participants described what could be termed as aspects of temporary transitional identities, where they did not feel they belonged in the UK but at the same time they were concerned about their return to their country of origin as they felt they had changed. This experience was referred to in the literature review as the "third place" (Crozet et al 1999:1). My analysis discussed individual participant experiences in the context of their reflections on aspects of identity relating to factors including culture, age, gender and faith. Hak for example provided a particularly interesting perspective as a Libyan Muslim and he expressed significant reservations about living in a multi-faith society where he believed he could not practise his faith, a key aspect of his identity, effectively and this caused him considerable concern.

Many younger international students are at a critical phase in the development of their personal identity when they make the decision to study overseas. Their identity may be already in transition from dependent child to more independent adult and their international experience may make this transition more challenging due to the affecting factors noted earlier, particularly when combined with a lack of support from family and friends because they have left their country of origin. By contrast the Peking participants offered a unique insight into the mechanisms used to maintain and indeed monitor a collective identity through the development of a community of practice, with a leader and clear set of behavioural expectations, which operated not just in relation to studying and assessment completion but which extended to the consumption of food and use of leisure time. This shared identity may have helped the Peking cohort to counteract the impact of their loss of status and recognition as an international student, denuded of the status linked to their position in local government.

Each participant spoke as an individual and not as a representative of those from their country of origin and while the interview content has been analysed in the

preceding chapters, consideration also needs to be given to each individual's narrative. In the context of identity, three categories, drawn from the work of Chambers (2002) have been used to describe my participants.

High self-esteem: this category is characterised by participants who reported feeling secure, loved and supported as a result of strong connections with family and friends. Family and friends mattered to those in this category and they demonstrated extrovert characteristics as they actively sought opportunities to extend and reconstitute their social networks while in the UK. Their developing high self-esteem was demonstrated through references to their growing confidence and independence. Khan, Thanula, Vishnu and Chai fit into this category.

Fluctuating: Meddy, Bala, Cham and Nancy emphasised the challenges and tensions inherent in their experiences. Family was very influential and there were clearly understood expectations. The families were often matriarchal and there were frequent expressions of homesickness. These participants were prone to reflection about what might have been, about becoming a different person and also the pressures relating to fulfilling the expectations others.

Low self-esteem: this last category included Wei, Hak, Andrew and Ernie. These individuals reported low self-confidence and had experienced loneliness and isolation which had resulted in feelings of alienation and a desire to return to their country of origin at the earliest opportunity. There was a sense of disappointment with their international experience as it and their academic performance, had not lived up to their initial expectations.

All participants strongly articulated one of these narratives but within each participant's story, links were sometimes made with another narrative. For example, Bala spoke at length about his sense of powerlessness in relation to his parent's and in particular his mother's plans for this future. At the same time he discussed becoming the sort of person who his parents wanted him to be while expressing pride in passing his modules and growing confidence in understanding himself and his abilities. This suggests that the international student experience is both fluid, in that it is affected by time and also complex, due to the variability of influencing factors. The above discussion makes it possible to move beyond the stereotyping and problematisation of international students and instead hear their individual voices, recognise their diversity, while understanding and validating their subjective experiences. As a consequence we are able to acknowledge that international students' lives comprise multiple and fluid narratives.

8.5 Reflections on significance

My contribution to knowledge in the field of international student experience has focused on the lack of homogeneity amongst international students in relation to their previous experiences and expectations. For example, the role and influence of the family has been underestimated in much published research and presents HEIs with

both opportunities for engagement but also a challenge in understanding and responding to an additional stakeholder. My research has added to the discussion on the influence of family by highlighting the pressure and responsibility some students, such as Bala and Thanula in particular, experience in their attempt to fulfil their parents' expectations and that of the wider societies from which they come. The emotional and financial investment of parents is complex and comes with expectations which can include academic success, marriage, career development and long-term financial security or the entire family.

The theme of expectations is also relevant for those more mature and independent students as while there may not be the strong influence of family, there are still expectations from employer sponsors, friends and family and again the wider society in their home country. The expectations of peers and staff at Midlands University were a further source of pressure for my participants as they struggled to identify these often variable expectations, particularly with reference to the successful completion of assessments.

The experiences of the international students involved in this study have been discussed within a framework of a variety of complex and interconnected transitions which have affected each individual differently. These transitional categories have included consideration of how international students negotiate changes in their cultural context; the dominant language; their economic circumstances; their identity and status from employee to student and for some from dependence to independence. These transitional experiences are unique to my participants and as such they make a contribution to our understanding of the challenges faced by international student studying in the UK.

A further area of interest which was identified in my research related to inter-student relationships. While much of the literature has focused on relationships between host and international students (Dalglish and Chan 2005), relatively little has been written about the relationships which international students have between themselves (Brown and Holloway 2008). While participants such as Bala and Khan were very positive about the benefits of working and socialising with students from other countries, others such as Thanula and Nancy were more cautious in their tone and indeed at times expressed views which suggested that they considered such an experience to be detrimental to their progression. Moving to a multicultural environment suggests that many international students will have and develop cultural intelligence, or what Imel (2000) referred to as international literacy. While some of my participants had clearly developed positive relationships with other international students and thereby a better understanding of different cultures, some expressed views which suggested a level of hostility, tension and national stereotyping.

The final area where I have contributed to the debate concerning international students concerns my discussion of the Peking cohort and their unique experience. This group were unique in that the four individuals in my research study were part of a larger group of 25 who had travelled together from Peking, sponsored in full by their

local government employer. This group had met in advance and had been briefed by those who had undergone the same experience in the previous year and having been subject to competitive selection, they had attended pre-departure briefings to support their preparation. This cohort was interesting as a result of their behaviour while on-campus. My interviews with them indicated that there was a very clear, shared view that they would live and study as a group. A group leader had been designated and that individual was responsible for the management of the group and it was understood that any behaviour which deviated from the established group norms would be regarded unfavourably and potentially reported back to those responsible for sponsorship.   So the experience of this group was very different to that of those who travelled independently and who expressed excitement at being completely independent for the first and in some cases quite possibly the last time in their lives. For the Peking cohort their international student experience was effectively a managed extension of their career, with a continued level of supervision and thus any independence was limited. The findings relating to this group have implications for institutions who recruit groups of students, either from other institutions or employers, as my research demonstrated limited integration and indeed the development of a self-selected and exclusive enclave by Peking group members.

I have indicated that I consider that there is an issue with institutional policy which has a tendency to regard international students as homogeneous, without due consideration to the diversity of the international student population. Whilst it was not an aim of this thesis to make policy recommendations, it would seem appropriate to highlight areas, based on my research findings, which would benefit from review.

Given the earlier discussion concerning the importance of English language proficiency, this finding would suggest that it would be helpful for HEIs to consider how students can develop their English language skills, both formally and informally to ensure they are fit for purpose and are developed during their studies. This could include for example consideration of pre-departure access to podcast lectures and reference to developmental English language resources. Both the literature and my findings found that a lack of engagement with native English language speakers was of concern to international students and so the identification of further opportunities to facilitate this would be welcomed.

The issue of understanding the implications of living and working in a multicultural environment cannot be covered simply as one element of an induction programme. International students would benefit from on-going support in skills such as communication, conflict management and intercultural relationships. Practical support in the form of mentors, student wardens in halls of residence and homestays with local families can all support international students in the development of both independence and cultural intelligence, whilst at the same time seeking to dilute their sense of cultural dislocation. The reconstitution of social networks has been identified as critical and institutions have a responsibility to facilitate the development of these through a wide range of activities to meet the needs of a diverse range of international students.

Many of us working in higher education do so from a perspective based on our experience of when we were students, often some considerable time ago and when the entire context of higher education was very different. My research has demonstrated that international students are not all in their early 20s with few responsibilities. This means that we need to consider how we can support and empathise with those international students who are accompanied by family members, those who come from faith-based cultures and those who experience significant stress for a variety of reasons. Having an informed and internationally-experienced staff base can only serve to enrich the international student experience.

My research provides some important insights into the experiences of the international students who participated in my study. Some of my findings, such as those relating to the influence of culture, the challenges of reconstituting social capital, experiences of loneliness, language competency and the influence of faith etc., can be found in various forms, in the work of others such as Brown and Jones 2013; Brown et al 2015; Hendrikson et al 2011; Hotta and Toomney 2013; Janta et al 2014. The following findings are unique to my research:

- **Family** – the influence and role of family , located both in the country of origin and in some cases in the UK, in the development of inter-generational social capital has been subject to limited research (Brooks 2015)
- **Peking cohort** – the exploration of the unique aspects of this cohort within a cohort facilitated the evaluation of the potential advantages and disadvantages of membership
- **Transitional categories** derived from the themes which arose in the participant interviews – as defined in Table 7.1

8.6   Limitations

Researchers such as Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson (2010) have sought to classify international student experiences through large scale quantitative research (with a sample of 979 international students) but authors such as Church (1982) have cast doubt on the usefulness of such research designs, querying their validity and generalisability. My qualitative research with twelve participants is at the opposite end of the scale but nevertheless the findings are unique and original and therefore valid. The qualitative method used was strong in its close focus on individuals but did not allow for the analysis of large numbers of international students or a statistically valid study of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and educational level. My twelve participants provided a broad range of experiences but by their very nature could not claim to be representative of the international student body. By focusing on the personal agency of international students, this research offers a change from the dominant approaches which tend to problematise issues relating to these individuals.

With regard to the generalisability of findings, I acknowledge that an interviewee sample of twelve participants and the selection of one setting make it difficult to move to general classifications and as such no claims concerning representation are made. Nonetheless, the voices of the participants in my study add an important dimension to understanding the spectrum of issues involved. However, ethnographers often feel that similar settings are likely to produce similar data and that theory-based generalisation can be achieved, involving the transfer of theoretical concepts, found in one situation, to other settings and conditions (Daymon and Holloway 2002). The setting for this research was chosen for my ability to transfer the findings to similar settings i.e. higher education institutions in the UK that recruit international postgraduate students and also to similar actors, international postgraduates on an MBA programme. It is possible to infer that such students may well face similar experiences to my participants.

At the same time it is important to acknowledge that international students are not a homogeneous group. There is a huge diversity of cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, social and vocational backgrounds. International students have widely different motivations for, and expectations of, studying abroad, as illustrated by my findings. So just as it is often unhelpful to see international students as having a common set of interests, issues and problems, so one should not switch these generalisations to easy sub-categorisations such as country of origin.

8.7 Future research

I recognise that in order to confirm the claims made here that further research should be undertaken with international students. These additional international students could originate from a wider range of countries, representing a broader range of demographic variables including age, gender and stage in family life cycle.

An alternative strategy for future research could be to attempt to focus on a discrete segment of the international student population such as those with accompanying family members. The interest here would lie in how such significant decisions are made and what are the short and longer term implications for both the individual students and their accompanying family members, as well as those family members who remain in the country of origin. Interest in this particular area was triggered by Hak and Nancy with the latter choosing to bring her nine year old daughter with her but leave her sixteen year old daughter back in China in the care of her husband.

A longitudinal study which tracked international students for a period of time following the completion of their award would allow for the exploration of the international student experience as it is affected by the opportunity to reflect. Cannon (2000) suggested that the outcomes from an international education experience can be complex and variable with many individuals experiencing what he defined as reverse culture shock on return to their home countries. Such a study could include consideration of the transition from full time student to return home on both the individual and their family, as well as exploring the longer term career impact.

I attempted to make contact with participants on their return home and received email responses from three individuals. A letter and email was sent to each participant asking them about their current employment and their reflections on their experience in the UK. Nancy had returned to her previous role in a university and she commented on how proud and glad she was to have spent a year in the UK as she felt it had been a good opportunity to challenge herself. Ernie, who had undertaken the MBA immediately after his first degree, felt that his MBA had helped to secure his current role in a private organisation but the content had been of limited value as his organisation operated only in China. Ernie had reflected on the timing of his MBA and he regretted not waiting until he had work experience as he considered he would have benefitted more. Ernie had maintained contact with some peers from China but noted that after graduation his peers had all moved onto a different life which diluted their common experience and so communication had declined. Vishnu, from India, considered that his UK MBA had helped him to secure a role in a wealth management organisation. He had continued to study some short courses and was considering taking a year out to study law. He remarked that the MBA had added value to his CV but he had been disappointed that he was unable to gain work experience in the UK as a result of the recession. He continued to maintain contact with peers through Facebook and Skype.

Two of my participants had completed their undergraduate degrees in their country of origin with a private provider working under a franchise agreement with a UK university. Both individuals expressed confidence from the outset that they felt they were well prepared for study in the UK as a result of this experience. Given the significant and growing number of transnational educational agreements in place it would be interesting to explore whether there were any significant differences in both experience and academic performance between such individuals and those international students with no experience of UK higher education.

Another gap which I identified in the literature relates to the institutional perspective. Most of the literature concerned with international students focused on detailing their various experiences and investigating the sources of these, with the emphasis often being on defining the various challenges they faced. By contrast relatively little work is published on what institutions do with international students by means of for example intervention strategies and consideration of how the effectiveness of these can be measured. Despite the plethora of research on international students, there is a shortage of published, empirically tested interventions that seek to decrease acculturative stress and aid the adaptation of international students. Facilitating a more positive adjustment and educational experience for international students is a growing interest and concern in higher education (Oilvas and Lee 2006). One could surmise that there is a conspiracy of secrecy in this area, as opposed to a desire to share good practice in the public domain. This could be considered to be illustrative of the highly competitive nature of the international student market.

A final area of future research which arose as a result of my research concerns international students' interactions with each other. Unlike the full time undergraduate body, which tends to be dominated by school leavers, postgraduate cohorts are often much more diverse in terms of age, work and life experience and qualifications. The maturity of some postgraduate students means they will already have formed values, attitudes and opinions which will inevitably impact on their experience as an international student. When the international dimension is added to this mix, alongside the requirement to work and study collaboratively, it is inevitable that conflict will arise. While it is recognised that my sample was not statistically representative of the diversity of the international student body, there was some evidence to suggest that there was some dislike between Chinese and Indian students. A further layer of complexity in this finding related to age as some of the Chinese students (from the Peking cohort) were older than most of the Indian students. This meant that, particularly in the case of Nancy, her criticism of some Indian students was based on ethnicity and their relatively young age and thus limited work and life experience. While there has been extensive research on how international students negotiate new relationships, the focus has been on the challenges of developing relationships with local students (Word and Masgoret 2004; East 2007; Sakurai 2010). The consensus has been that many international students find it very difficult to form relationships with local students and this can result in the development of enclaves, where factors such as language, ethnicity and previous experiences are shared and thus familiarity is assured (Church 1982). A more ethnographical study would provide rich data to explore inter-international student relationships.

Funding cuts, continuous immigration regulation changes and significantly increased tuition fees, all contribute to the debate about whether the UK is an attractive place for international students to study. What this thesis has underlined is that international education is not just an export industry; each individual international student bring their own important and diverse human story.

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Annexes:

1. **Interview formats:**

1a) Autumn 2008 interview schedule

1b) Spring 2009 interview schedule

2. **Participant interview transcriptions:**

2a) Bala autumn interview

2b) Thanula spring interview

3. **Summaries of transcriptions:**

3a) Vishnu

3b) Nancy

4. **Communication with participants:**

4a) Initial email

4b) Response email

4c) Interview agreement

5. **Ethics approval form**

Annex 1: Interview formats:

1a: Autumn 2008 interview schedule

- *reminder that all content is **confidential, anonymous** and for my research purposes only*
- *request permission to audio tape*
- *advise that if participant does not wish to answer any questions, then they do not have to*

Family and educational backgrounds

- Start with family – what parents do/any siblings – their educational experiences?

- I'm interested in understanding how you've come to Midlands University Business School to undertake postgraduate study and so it would be really helpful if you could go right back to when your first started school and tell me a bit about your experiences?

- Secondary school up to leaving cert or equivalent covered?

- Decision to undertake degree level study – subjects, location – decision making process?

- Decision to come to UK/ Midlands University Business School /subject?

- How were decisions made – key influences/influencers?

- Thinking back to before you arrived – what did you expect – what did you think it would be like to live and study here - where did you get this information from?

Here and now:

- So you've been here a few weeks now – the induction is over and you've settled into your classes – how do you think it is going? Link back to pre-arrival expectations – what are the differences between previous experiences/expectations/perceived reality?

- Do you think you know what you're supposed to be doing?

- How do you feel about being taught and assessed and English?

- Can you tell me about the other students on your award?

- What do you do when you're not studying?

- How do you find people outside the University – the local community? What do you think of British culture?

- Are you working (i.e. paid employment?)

- Do you keep in touch with family and friends from home? How frequently? How?

The next 12/18 months:

- What do you think you are going to find the most challenging aspects of completing your studies?

- Do you think this experience will change you - how?

- What do you hope to get from this experience?

1b: Spring 2009 interview schedule:

- *reminder that all content is **confidential, anonymous** and for my research purposes only*
- *request permission to audio tape*
- *advise that if participant does not wish to answer any questions then they do not have to*

Develop an understanding of participants' current experiences in terms of values, challenges, benefits etc.

- How have things been at University since we last spoke in autumn?

- What academic skills do you think you have learned?

- What life skills do you think you have learned?

- How do you think these will affect you in your work life – any changes?

- How will they affect you in your personal life?

- Can you pick out a highlight/lowlight from this year?

- How do you feel about your results from the first semester?

- If you were asked to talk to friends (in private with no managers around in the case of Peking students) thinking of doing this award what would you tell them were the best and worst aspects of being here for a year – can you think of two of each?

- Are you doing any paid work – explore?

- Tell me about your social life?

- Have you been home or had family or friends come to the UK to visit you?

- How have you found working in groups with students from different nationalities?

- Do you think that your nationality has affected your stay here

Identify attitudes and perceptions linked to education

- How do you feel about your decision to come to Midlands University?

- Would you recommend coming to the UK to study to a friend and why?

- Would you recommend coming to Midlands University Business School to do your award to a friend and why?

- Have you made any friends who you think you will maintain contact with – where are they from? Your award or another?

- What do you think of the way you have been taught?

- Do you think you have become a more independent learner and why?

- What do you think of the teaching staff who you have come into contact with?

Explore concerns and challenges

- What still concerns you about completing your award?

- How do you feel about leaving the University and the UK?

- How do you feel about returning home?

- Do you think your manager and work colleagues will have expectations of you? (If going back to same employer – Peking?)

- Do you think your family and friends will have particular expectations of you?

- What are your work plans when you return home (for non-Peking)?

- In what ways, if any, do you think you have adapted to living in the UK?

- In what way – if any, do you think you have changed?

Annex 2: Participant interview transcriptions

Annex 2a): Bala's autumn 2008 interview transcript

8th October 2008

A mature student from Tamil, southern India. Early 30s, good English but heavily accented. This was a long and rather rambling interview, where the student was keen to discuss his perspective and as such it was difficult to keep the interview on track. He was confident and pleasant. At the end he refused the offer of a book token, indicating that he had met with me to help with my research and not for a reward. In the UK for 21 days.

Duration: 1 hour, 14 minutes

DG: So can you tell me whereabouts is home, where are your family from?
B: I am from the southern part of India – it's called Tamil Nadu.
DG: Yes, ok right … and you've lived there all your life?
B: Yes … after my engineering I have moved to some other places because of my job and everything.
DG: Right.
B: But most of the time I have spent in Tamil Nadu.
DG: Ok … so you are an engineer by background?
B: Right … I was a mechanical engineer.
DG: Ok … that was your first degree?
B: Yes … the thing is I was always like a kind of a rebel and I was not into the academics.
DG: Right …
B: I would be going to school because my parents wanted me to but I would not be concentrating on the classes and everything, I would get into a bit of trouble, actually in India you go to year twelve and then after year twelve you would be going to college, the thing is I passed most of my tenth exams but I failed my year twelve mathematics, I have a problem with mathematics.
DG: Ok …
B: The thing is that is one of the subjects that you cannot study the day before the exams and hope to pass.
DG: Yes you need to know it.
B: Yes so other exams I used to study the day before the exam and somehow pass.
DG: Yes …
B: But mathematics it doesn't work like that so I failed in maths and then I resat the same exam and failed again so then I went on to my engineering because you don't need twelve, year ten qualification is enough.
DG: Ok …
B: So that wasn't my choice because at the time I don't have any choices … my parents wanted this for me.
DG: So what age were you then?

B: I was sixteen, seventeen.

DG: Ok …

B: So I went on to mechanical engineering ... not by my choice.

DG: Ok …

B: So somehow ... my parents said I would not finish it … but I did finish it, I passed my examinations and I got my diploma so the next step was I did was a degree mechanical engineering … I cannot be come as doctor or something else, so I did my diploma in mechanical engineering, then the thing is when you go for an interview or something you need to know the subject.

DG: Of course.

B: But again the maths became a problem because I had to resit some maths papers. It's different in my state, it's different in different parts of India, in my state you have to pass everything, if you complete your engineering it doesn't matter about the graduation of your engineering – if you get 60%, you will get a first class, but in my state if you don't finish within the three years, even if you are above 60% then you will get a third class.

DG: So you were in the wrong state!

B: Yes … that's right, I cleared the mathematics in the next semester but the thing is as I didn't complete with the graduation time, I didn't get a first class as I didn't complete within the duration, I wasn't eligible for the top industries and so I due to my familiarity with English, I went into a small marketing company.

DG: Ok …

B: I was there for some time … the job was to market special purpose machinery.

DG: Ok... so not actually doing engineering but having an understanding of engineering obviously was very helpful?

B: Right … yes for this particular job, then another thing came out, like India has 200 languages and a lot of other dialects, now the thing is that in part of India, we speak either English or my mother tongue which is Tamil.

DG: Yes …

B: It's an ancient language, as old as Sanskrit, it has been around for 2,000 years, now the national language of India is Hindi, that's a language that I don't know and most people in my region don't know and so if you go to other states it will be difficult to communicate.

DG: Is the alphabet the same?

B: No … it is completely different, so the language that is supposed to unite India is Hindi, there was legislation passed that everyone should learn Hindi, so that it would connect the whole of India.

DG: Yes …

B: But people in my state said no because our language is more ancient than your language, so we stood our ground, so most of us don't know Hindi but we do know English.

DG: Yes …

B: So when we are travelling around we are using English as the main communicating language and not Hindi.

DG: Ok …

B: So I was not very comfortable because when I was travelling in other states I should be using English but most people are not that much comfortable in using English. Another thing is that I was not much of a travelling person.

DG: But you are here in England!

B: Yes … the thing is I when I go to another place, it does not matter how hard it is or how rough it is … I will create a comfort zone, and I think I could even live in a prison or something. I will create a comfort zone but I will like to stay in that place itself. So if you want me to go to Germany, then I will go to Germany.

DG: Mmmnnn …

B: But then don't ask me to go to France the next month. So after some time I thought there was too much travelling, I don't really like travelling … I think maybe the reason is that I had a little bit of travel sickness, like in my teens and whenever I travel in a car or bus or something, I used to throw up. So … maybe psychologically I am not much of a traveller. So I quit that job and I went to work in a call centre because that is where they pay very good if you have the communications skills but you have to work hard, you have to work all shifts, for example I was working for Hindustan Computer limited and this is affiliated to AT&T the big American computer company, number one in the world and this is what my job is – the customers would be using the AT&T internet service and then if they cannot use the internet, then they will call us and then I have to ask them questions, what's wrong and I have to tell them how to fix it through the phone itself.

DG: Yes …

B: So that's my job … so that's like a high pressure job, you need good communication skills, I'll give you one example, I got one particular call from a little bit old lady she said my internet is not working, that is not fair, I pay you this much every month, you people are irresponsible, you are the worst, I am going to write to your company … that sort of thing and I was listening to this for about fifteen minutes, then well we have to use a script so I say I am real sorry about that, let me see what I can do, there are several procedures, like you've got to switch off the computer, you have to turn it back on and then you have to check all the cables.

DG: Yes …

B: And she is not willing to do that, she says I am paying you this much money and I am not going to jump around this table to get it fixed, I want my internet working now, so of course there is no magic wand to fix the problem – I really need some cooperation, so I have to try to help and we are not supposed to hang up on a customer.

DG: No, it must be very difficult to be happy all the time.

B: I try my best to tell her ma'am I am here to help you and I will help you but you must check that these cables are in correctly and she says I am an old lady, I cannot tell the difference between a green cable and a black cable, you Indians are rude, you want us to crawl around under my table … so it is a high pressure job.

DG: Yes …

B: But I survived that for four years and I got promoted and everything else was going fine but after some time my engineering … it's not enough, if you want to get into management you need to have an MBA. So I thought I can do an MBA in India, there are some very good institutions but due to my travel sickness problem and everything

I had not been around many parts of the world so I am a bit like a frog in a well and do not know about other places so I thought let's go to some foreign country and do that so the first place you think of is America but they have a GMAT GSAT that kind of thing and my maths is still a problem, the next option is Australia then the UK and then Canada, they are not tough like America. So the thing is that I have a sister who is living here in Redford so obviously I chose England and I prefer here because my sister is living in Redford.

DG: In Redford, where is that?

B: I am not good at map reading, from here go to Stockport and then by train go to Sheffield and it is near there.

DG: Do you mean Bradford?

B: No, it's called R-e-d-f-o-r-d.

DG: I'm from Northern Ireland, which is why I have a strange accent and my English geography isn't particularly good.

B: Well if you go in a car, it's like two hours from here.

DG: So she lives here and works or studies here?

B: Yes she lives here, she is a doctor, and she has been here for two or three years.

DG: Ok so you came to the UK because of the family contact so why did you come to the University then?

B: Well I looked around for universities that would provide me with an MBA so I looked at ones near my sister and chose this one, you know I always believe that wherever you go to university it is up to you and how's your personality, whether you can go through that, these sort of things, so I chose this particular university.

DG: So which MBA are you doing?

B: I am doing the MBA international.

DG: Ok, so obviously you are a more mature student so how do your family feel about you coming here?

B: They are the first reason why I am here because I am the kind of person who says I like to work in India, I don't see anything wrong with this of course you have other people who say that it is not a good life in developing countries.

DG: But developing very fast.

B: Yes it is developing very fast … this is how it is. In my family you can become … everyone can do something specially, anyone call work in a call centre ... you have to have an attitude, it's a hard life but if you are a tough type of person then you can make good money. So this is the thing … I have, my parents have three children, my elder sister had moved to America, they are proud of her, their other daughter is a doctor, here in England, they are proud of her and a son who is working in a call centre, you have to go to some place, to some foreign country so they can be proud of you so that is life. So I didn't come here just because of them, I need an MBA to get to the next level, so they are proud that I am here and they believe that I can pass this one too!

DG: I am sure you will – you have their support and their encouragement don't you? Ok so that's your family and where you have come from and you are doing your MBA to move onto a higher level of management, presumably … is there a perception in India that a UK MBA is good, it's something positive?

B: In India this is how they think, they think that to study in developed countries is a good thing, some people know about Cambridge and places like that but most people are satisfied if you go to a developed country to do an MBA, that's something to be proud of, still in India, that is how it is for 90% of the population, now the other thing is most people prefer English speaking countries because they study English in our school system so that is a very good thing. The first place people think of is America, that is number one, so if they can do the GMAT GSAT that is their first choice, now if they are not interested to do a GMAT GSAT or whatever then they will be looking into other English speaking countries and the first places that come to mind are the UK, Scotland and England, then Australia, Canada, maybe New Zealand for a few people, so these are things that some to their mind. But if I go to Germany or France or Italy obviously they will be having some problem with their language so this is how it is. So this is why you cannot deny the fact that you are going to have international exposure but most people … because it is very hard to get out of the country and study in some other country … it is like fighting against the gravitational force to go to the space, always you can find some reason to stay there – not only is it cheaper, in India it is becoming a good educational hub there are like good AITs there, good universities of management. So any graduate trying to get into a good AIT will not be trying the foreign countries or if they don't get in there, then they will be trying the foreign countries. First they will be trying to get into the six AITs in India, the thing is if you get a qualification from an AIT then the next thing is you will be getting a position in Pepsi Cola or a company like that so that is what people try and if they fail to do that then the next thing they try for an international university, they will try for America first, then they will be trying England, Scotland and the others.

DG: Ok … so your influence was partly your parents and your sister saying come over here and I'll make you a hot meal on Sundays! So had you been to England before?

B: No … never.

DG: So what were your expectations – you have been here two or three weeks?

B: I came here on like the 18th of last month, so my expectations are ok. This is what I assume England would be like and this is what it is, I don't believe in Utopia, for example people are saying that in every country there will be tough neighbourhoods, where you may not cope, I have been told about pubs in England where you cannot walk in if you are a stranger, it does not matter if you are black, white, or brown … but I have been in tough places in India. For example, in one visit for my previous company I was down in Delhi on a train, there are sometimes unreserved compartments, you get a ticket for a train but you have not reserved a seat, now in that part of India I do not know their mother tongue, they know their mother tongue, at one time I was standing in a train for eight hours, this is not a train journey where I have space to stand, I have to stand like on my toes for eight hours, I was literally standing on my toes that's how crowded it is, this train only stops in two or three places and a corridor tussle starts to happen, this is inevitable because someone is leaning on you, someone is sitting on some lady's lap and you can imagine the heat in an Indian summer, I was carrying like 2,500 rupees … he was talking in his language and I am talking in my language and then I found like someone stole my purse and the thing is that had all the money that I had and my return ticket to get

home was in there too. So I was stranded there and I had a friend there but I did not know if he was there or not – I had been in Delhi for ten days but I had been so busy that I did not call him so this is how it is, so at like eleven o'clock at night I go to the police station and I tell the cop there, you know they can't fight it.

DG: No, it's impossible.

B: They were very courteous … ok I am sorry that this happened, then I said may I use your telephone, so I used the telephone to call my friend and luckily he was there and he came out and I stayed in his room and I got some money from him and I went home. So I have had some difficult situations.

DG: Well you'll be ready for British Rail then because our railways can be pretty grim, maybe not so hot but still pretty grim!

B: But I have been in tough places, even if a person doesn't know the language but I will tell you one thing there is a universal language   If a person is walking your way, if you stand to let them pass, they will respect you, it does not matter in what part of the country you are or in which part of the world you are, that is about being courteous and having respect for everyone. You don't disrespect anyone and if your views are not suitable for the crowd then don't give them out. So these are the basic things and it doesn't matter whether you know the custom. I believe that if you know the human nature then you can survive anywhere. There was one interesting incident that happened when I came here, I came into Heathrow airport at five o'clock in the morning.

DG: Heathrow is dreadful isn't it?

B: I think I have been in worse places, I can handle Heathrow, I have no complaints about that, my sister came and picked me up, her and her husband, I had a good sleep and the next day there was a lovely climate and she was very happy, she is the one who always talks to me on the phone, she will say you should come to England it's not like India, there's no pollution at all and people are so courteous and you should come to my place – there's a lot of fields near my house, you can go for a walk, there are so many fields, like you see in the Sherlock Holmes movies, you can go for a walk. White people are very polite like and everything and so about four o'clock she says come on let's go for a walk so I can show you around Redford and so we are walking, she and her husband, he is walking a few feet in front of us and I am talking to my sister, we are walking behind. Obviously we walk past some people who we don't know and they are saying things about the weather and good evening and everything, they are very nice people and we return and say ok good evening and everything. Now she is very proud and thinking that this is great.   Then after sometime we went to a road that was just leading to a field, by the side of the road there were big bushes and everything, so the thing is that we are walking along the road and cars are coming in this direction and that direction and she says it is not wise to walk in this direction as cannot see what is coming.

DG: So you need to be facing that traffic?

B: Right, so now we are facing the traffic, so we are talking to each other and then we find that the road we are travelling has a blind bend and we fail to notice since we are talking.

DG: Yes …

B: So what she said is that now we should go to the other side because people coming that way will not notice us, ok so now we are waiting as there are some cars coming then we saw three or four cars coming and everyone was looking at us because obviously they were not expecting people to be walking on this side of the road and so some people are honking and some people give us a weird look. So she said ok it is our fault, then finally there was a red car with two young people in it, about twenty years or whatever, then they honked and they left. She said that she made a mistake and now she is sad so she says let's go down another road straight into a field, ok so that's a quiet road with no cars coming there but I said ok, she knows this place better and she says let's go down this road so we will not annoy anyone else. So we went down that road and then I did not notice the red car that went down that side seems to have stopped, now my brother in law he has walked before us and these people might not have noticed him, so according to them a boy and girl are walking down a lonely road, I know how people think, I have been in that situation myself. So the thing is we are walking and we did not notice that, then after sometime this car turned around and came in our direction, still my brother in-law is walking in front, he has not noticed, now this car came and stopped in front of us and these people are saying you should not walk like this you'll be ran over. Now I know quite clearly that these people did not come back to give us advice on walking on roads but they have some other intentions, probably to get out of the car. Then my brother in-law, he turned around and he came walking towards us. Then these people in the car noticed him and they stopped talking to me, as soon as they noticed another guy coming from that direction, they stopped talking to me, they turned the car around and they said something about stupid Pakis and then they went off. So I don't think that makes me think less of this country.

DG: But it has to affect it, I think that's unusual and very unpleasant, especially for your sister.

B: Yes, she is so upset … of course she does not want that to happen when I am around. But I know that bad things happen in India too, I know that so many foreigners have been abused and cheated, killed maybe by Indians themselves. Maybe someone has one bad experience, maybe they come to Calcutta alone and they will be overwhelmed by the sight of so many beggars.

DG: Yes, it's like when people come to London and they think all England is like London and it's not.

B: Yes, exactly.

DG: I have been to Delhi and Mumbai and I thought they were fantastic cities.

B: Yes they are but I tell you if you are going to walk around those cities late at night then you will have a problem.

DG: Yes it is the same in any city in the world. So where do you think you've got your ideas about what it's like to live in England, obviously your sister has been very important?

B: No, not at all … although before she would say to me there are Asian neighbourhoods but they are dirty, she says I want to live with white people so I don't want to live in any Asian neighbourhood, so I don't get a lot from her.

DG: Was there anything that surprised you coming here?

B: Not at all … ok one thing that I did not expect did happen, there is a movie called Kumar and Harold in Guantanamo Bay – have you seen that movie?

DG: Not I don't think I have.

B: This is part one – one is Indian and one is of Korean descent and they are in America and they face some prejudice, it's an adult comedy, what happens is these two people go to Holland and they are suspected as terrorists.

DG: Right …

B: And then they are sent to the Guantanamo Bay and there is one scene in this movie which I never would have believed would have happened to me, what happens is these people escape from Guantanamo Bay so this Harold's parents have been called upon and these are a south Korean gentleman and a south Korean gentle lady, his parents, father and mother, there is an officer and a south Korean interpreter with him.

DG: Right …

B: And they will be asking him questions, to Harold's father, about their son, through the interpreter who is South Korean.

DG: Yes …

B: Then the father would say I don't know why he is in here in English, in good English, right, now this interpreter would say I don't know what he is saying, he is using some other dialect, then he would say if you want to play tough then we will play tough. Then he said, ok sir I have been here for forty years, I know English. Still the interpreter would say he's saying something else, so the cop would say you people are so tough. So my example, the other day we took a tour of certain industries and there was a bar there where you could go and get a free drink, there was a lot of us there so you have 110 people going for a free drink. There were only three girls there and I felt very sad for them, I was waiting till the last so the others could get their drinks so I thought I should give some money to them, so I took a pound and I gave it to her and I said ok this is a tip. Then I asked for some orange juice and then she said orange juice is free, she said this loudly

DG: Did she think you had a hearing problem?

B: She was saying no, no money and I said ok I know that, this is a tip. She said tip what is a tip? I think probably she didn't expect that word to come out of my mouth.

DG: Yes, it was a misunderstanding?

B: Another thing happened to me, I went to get my eyesight tested and she said to me you might have a retinal detachment, I am wearing contact lenses now. I have heard of a retinal detachment and it can happen to boxers. So I said exactly what I have said to you now and she said no it will not happen to you when you walk. Then I said no for boxers … pugilists and then she laughed and when the time was over she said don't worry it will not happen while you walk. I think the joke is on me. So sometimes people look at you and do not understand what you are saying. I am very sure I was talking to them very slowly, I am very sure that if the same came out of a white person's mouth, they would have understood.

DG: So you think you may experience some communication challenges?

B: Yes, I don't think it will be a big challenge.

DG: Yes, just occasionally.

B: Right … it happens to everyone.

DG: It still happens to me and my husband and we have been together for twenty one years, he says he doesn't understand some of the things that I say.

B: What they say is when you talk to a new person after five minutes or so you will both be used to each other – that means I don't think there will be a big communication problem.

DG: Ok, so you've been here for a couple of weeks now, you've been through the induction and you know what you're supposed to be doing, do you feel you know what you're supposed to be doing, where you're supposed to be and what's expected of you on the course – having been away from study for a while it will take a while to get back into it perhaps?

B: Yes, the thing is that for most people who come here it's not easy to come to a foreign country.

DG: No …

B: So if someone comes here it doesn't matter if they are coming from Finland or America, Germany or whatever, it does take a little more confidence to be here. Because they are here they are willing to do whatever is required of them so I do not have any doubt about that. Of course we know that it is going to be tough, more hours, it's not gonna be easy doing dissertation we've been warned about plagiarism and so many things. I am willing to do what is required, if someone says I need to do 80 hours of study, then I am willing to do that. You have to do what is required of you to do what you want to do.

DG: Yes …

B: If you are not willing to do what is required of you then there is no point in staying here, I don't know, I think that one part will be a challenge, most of the international students were signed up for the MBA general, while we have been here we have been introduced to other specialities, like the MBA international, the MBA finance and the MBA HR – so if you want to do some speciality courses you can do that and so now after some time we have only three or four people who want to do the MBA general, they want to do the international there is a residential.

DG: Ah yes … the Prague residential.

B: Yes, others want to do finance they see that exciting things are happening in this area and HR is about people so if you like people. Now I don't want to go to any speciality without making my mind up, so I have been going around and thinking what is most suitable for me, finance because of mathematics, I am not that keen, HR is not very popular, my father says no-one in HR ever makes it to CEO level in a company and anyone who has to take care of people has a liability. So I am thinking about international but I am the sort of person who wants to create a comfortable zone, I am not the sort of person who goes around from country to country, even if it is required, I will not be comfortable with that. I only want to do what I am comfortable in doing. So they have told us when the exams are gonna happen, when we've got to give in the dissertation and what are the things that we should not be doing as well as the things that we should be doing. Some people are already overwhelmed by this, they are already saying …

DG: It's a lot of information.

B: Yes, it's a lot of information … some of them are scared. One of my friends, before he came here he thought he could pass and now he is really scared of not

being able to complete his MBA. After the first week of the induction he said he was a little bit afraid now there was some information given at the end of the induction that should have been given at the beginning, like all of this things that can go wrong and make sure that people are very serious about what they are doing. But I am used to this in my last company I was doing the same thing to other newcomers because I was working in a call centre and now people think that this is a high paid job but it is also a stressful job – people who are going there are looking at the salary but once they are there they realise that this is tough – so I have to show them what they are getting into so I used to scare them a little – so I totally understand what will happen here.

What followed was not transcribed – problem with catering staff.

DG: When I came to speak with you last week it was obvious that there was a really broad range of students from all over the world, so tell me about the other students on your award – have you got to know some of them?
B: Yes, there is a big group of students from China, more than I expected, then there are students from India, from Pakistan and from Sri Lanka – a couple of people from African countries – from Malawi and other countries but I've forgot and one person from the UK itself. So the thing is that in this particular group I do not think that there will be any friction, because everyone is a mature student and everyone is concentrating on getting an MBA. So of course there is so much flexibility, ok I do not think that anyone will say that I am not studying with them, live with them, eat with them, because that will not happen over here, because if you are going for an MBA they are not going to say I do not like people from this country or that country or whatever – maybe that might happen when you go to the group studies where some people are more dominating and are bossing around, they might go on and say that these people are not very serious but everyone if friendly and has respect for other people. I make sure that I don't step on anyone's toes – may be it is different on some other courses, if they have any views I am pretty sure that they are not showing it.
DG: So when you are not studying and you're not in class, you're not reading, what do you do in your free time?
B: Now that has been my problem for a lot of years and something I have encountered in my work too because in my work, it is hard work in a call centre and I know that others go out to let the steam off because you can say this is the new ideology of the high pressure workers, word hard, play hard. Unfortunately this is not something that … I am a manager … a golf course but I do not like golf. This is a little bit of a problem because all my life I have done whatever I should like to do and now I have to be here because I want to be recognised so for some time now I have been doing whatever I want to do – if these clothes are comfortable to me then this is what I will wear, not because they are looking good. So if I get a day off then I'll be going to my home, this is the best place in the world, home – I have a collection of books which I like to read – I buy a lot of books but I read very few of them.
DG: Yes … I know that feeling.

B: I have so many books which I haven't read but that is the first thing that I will do – I also have a lot of DVDs which I like to watch – so home is the best place. Now I have a couple of books with me in my room – so this is the thing, in this course I think I know what is expected of me and I am willing to do that, if someone says you have to study for twenty hours then I am willing to do that, but after that I need to go back to my place.

DG: So have you been out with other students at all?

B: No … but I know that is not a good thing too.

DG: It's a personal choice.

B: No that's not it because if you go out with people then you learn a lot of things – right, so I very much would like to do that but the thing is at the end of the day I am more comfortable in my room, going there and reading my books – this is what I've been doing for the last few weeks.

DG: Have you joined any clubs or sports teams or anything?

B: No, I want to enjoy the environment that's what I am trying to do but first I need to know how the things is gonna work because I need to know how much time I am going to spend – how much time I have to spend on other activities, so next week I am thinking I might go and try to visit them because I think that is very important. Because my philosophy is that you should be helping others – it doesn't matter which place you are in – you have a responsibility to help society and that's very important. Ok it's – that's the first thing I ask my sister – you have been here for two years – what is the community service that you have done, what have you done for the country? When you live in a strange country people will not know you so when things go wrong you will be the first victim – ok I am not saying that will happen in England, it could happen in India, it could happen in Africa, or wherever, so it's very important that if anyone goes to a new country, he has to get socially involved with that place, they should not wait to be asked to do something after a flood or whatever, he should go out. I think that's the problem that led to the big Nazi thing that happened – maybe Jewish people didn't mingle. So I think that everyone should not keep to himself, they should mingle with them.

DG: So you realise that you need to make an effort, it's very early days but you need to make an effort to develop friendships?

B: Of course I do … because it's a good feeling that we are helping others, it is also your responsibility that you have to make the first move when you go to a new place.

DG: Ok … so thinking about your plans for this year, are you planning to get any employment, any part time work?

B: No, I – that's what I thought before I came here and I have had some information given to me but it looks like I will not because I don't think I can do the two things at the same time. When I was working I would still be working late even when everyone has done there work – I will still be doing it , you don't have to ask me to stay and no-one will expect me to do that but for my own satisfaction I will be doing things to make it a little bit better. Most times people did not even notice that I have done this but I will be doing this for personal satisfaction.

DG: So you think that you wouldn't have time for part time work?

B: Right because I think it would take up too much time.

DG: So given that this is the first time that you have been away from your family home for a long period, have you been in touch with your family and friends?

B: Yes, my sister calls every night to check what I have eaten.

DG: Every night … wow!

B: Yes she wants to know what I have had for breakfast, for lunch and dinner and if she is not happy with what I am eating she will make sure that I come to her home on Saturday and Sunday and have a good meal but I do not think that I can go there every Saturday and Sunday – I don't think I can go there every week but then parents will be calling my sister to find out how I am doing.

DG: It's like having three parents!

B: Right … my sister is the first port of call, they will not call me because they think they might disturb me studying or sleeping so they will be calling my sister and then my sister will be calling me so that's how it is.

DG: Right … ok, what do you think you are going to find the most difficult thing about doing this course … about completing it? Is there one thing that …

B: Well as of now what I don't understand – I have copies of all reports and I have attended all lectures, one class each, so what I'm still not sure is what is expected from me to pass this course.

DG: Ok …

B: For example, we had a HR lecture, it's a discussion, ok I have a point of view and I told my point of view – someone had an opposite point of view and I think that's fine but just what I need to know, I am happy with this, ok, I am very comfortable with this and I don't have any problem but I still don't know when it comes to exams what is expected of me – if I am supposed to find out something, am I supposed to stick with one point of view even if I don't agree with it. So for example we had a healthy debate today about whether you can motivate employees with money but I don't agree with that because all the bank managers and most of the salaried persons … that would lead to disaster so I think most people are salaried because they are achieving what they want – so for example for the bank person, the number of customers he is going to get coming into the bank – is it enough to sell bonds – someone should be checking, analysing the business, If you want to be a CEO of a business, they will give you six months and then if things do not go well then you will lose your job.

DG: Do you think this whole experience will change you as a person?

B: I would be happy if it does but I'm not sure it will because … I have been through a huge transition since my early teens, I was a bit of rebel then but now I am always doing what I am supposed to be doing. So I have changed drastically and I am looking for something that will change me … I will not say I will not change. But for I have also seen something that has startled me … because most of the arguments or ideas have been put towards me are something that I think … the book says ... I do understand the theory but in somethings I think they are missing on some essence.

DG: Yes … they don't have your experience do they?

B: Right.

DG: So what do you think you will get from this experience?

B: This is what I want ok – I want to … myself. I also have some ideas, may be bring out a business book one day, I don't know but maybe I'll never do that. I need to get

used to, you know, how the business people here think, the academic side of business ok what they are expected to do, what they are really doing. This is what they say no-one should become an artist without knowing the general art – so draw the figure correctly first before you become a modern artist … so that's why I'm here, I want to draw the broader figure ... that is what the MBA means for me, then I will go on to the modern art.

DG: Ok so you'll develop your interpretation of it … do you think you will go back to India to work then?

B: The fact is that ok I am gonna go back to India to live, most people are not acknowledging it but this is true. If someone has a business or something they will surely go back.

DG: Yes …

B: If someone does not have a business over there, someone is gonna come here and then they are gonna go back to their own country – this is a fact, they will be regarded as a failure – there is this subtle thing, ok this is what people think. This is what I think, ok there is an opportunity India … some people become a good working person, the people who go back after their education they are a failure.

DG: Do you think your parents will think that?

B: Of course they will.

DG: Did they go to university?

B: My mother went to university ... she is a housewife, she is a good administrator.

DG: And your father?

B: He is a senior railway engineer, he has just retired last year – so his job was to earn money and my mother raised the family – that is how it is – so both my parents have been to universities.

DG: Ok and they have high expectations?

B: Of me – yeah … there are good Indian companies and good multinational companies too. It's very simple – most people would not like to admit it, most people would be shy to admit it but if your family are in India then you are coming from a developing country … now most people who are here have the same view … but they are lying … so that is how it is.

DG: So this is part of a longer plan?

B: Yeah ... but this is what is my plan, I will not stay in this country for very long … I am not a person who will do that but I will be here for some years.

DG: Will you look at the placement do you think?

B: Yes … that is what my first plan is, most probably I will be trying for that.

DG: Yes ... that may help you later then?

B: Yes … exactly – but my plan is I will be here for five or ten years or whatever maybe fifteen max because the thing is I have something else to do with my life – *the student then proceeds to discuss a planned spiritual journey – not relevant and so not transcribed* … you have to be in different situations to understand who you are – being in a comfortable zone, you will not know who you are – when you understand who you are, then you can fix yourself – so for the next ten or fifteen years I will be doing all that is expected of me to do and after that I will be looking at myself and seeing what I am doing, then for the next few years, in this life or maybe in the next life I would like to fix it – that's the whole thing.

DG: And so this is just a little part of it?
B: Yes … of the whole plan.

Annex 2b) Thanula's Spring Transcript

23rd June 2009

A mature student from Colombo, but whose family originated from India. Mid 20s, very good English. Thanula had completed her first degree in Colombo with a UK HEI and had been working at the British Council. She was confident, relaxed and keen to share her views.

Duration: 55 minutes

DG: Ok then, it's been about 9 months since we last spoke in the middle of September – how have things been for you since then?

T: I already feel like a Stokie! *(laughter)* I can't believe how time has moved. I mean I can't that, I mean it feels like we just came, so much has happened, so many experiences, everything is very good. I don't think an hour is enough. It's been really good, the experience, the exposure and everything. It's been extremely good because every day, for me, there is an experience. I am learning academically, I am going to work, everything, even getting up is a challenge for me. When I was back home I could not get up before eight o'clock, now I am getting up at six o'clock, at five o'clock. This morning without an alarm I woke up at five o'clock in the morning – I was like oh my god, probably because of the sunshine. So this is a good thing. I have been looking forward to the summer for the weather to become better.

DG: So you think things have gone well – better than you expected?

T: Yeah, better than I expected but I thought that the whole thing was such a rush, I was feeling so stressed. The stress I could not have imagined. The stress was not only moving but the culture shock – I think if I were to do this again then I would choose a two year course – this is more like a crash course because the whole thing has gone very fast. Sometimes I felt that I have no spare time, I cannot do everything.

DG: Did you feel there was a difference between the first and the second semesters?

T: Oh yes, a drastic difference. The first semester was more like guided, it had a guided structure, the second semester more of your own work but I felt that even so sometimes one or two lecturers, you go and ask for help, they could not explain it to us in a way that we could understand. I mean, with one lecturer in particular, any time we went they either went off tangent, our questions were not answered or something like that so I have to, it's not only me, it's others as well. So we go and ask a very specific question and we still do not have that question answered and then you just give up.

DG: So why do you think that was – what was going on there with your communication?

T: It's not our communication – it's just that I think he is growing old because even in class while he is teaching he goes off tangent. So sometimes at the beginning of class, the whole class will be there, it's a three hour class and you know like within one hour, two thirds of the class are missing and you think that after the break – I couldn't understand that so I won't be able to understand the next two hours and that

was repeating over and over again in the whole of the module but he gave us some good articles which I understand. In other modules we could understand the articles as well as apply the concepts from class. For me I have never done strategy before and strategy was supposed to be new and I wanted to learn it – I was looking forward to that module and I couldn't get it, I couldn't understand it at all – in fact I barely passed. I think I could have managed my timing much more better. Now I have my timing plan sorted out but at the beginning I was finding it really difficult with my work.

DG: Have you been working since the beginning?

T: No, I started working from Christmas but at the beginning I was finding it so difficult with my timing. Here you need to keep yourself – it's not like being at home.

DG: But you are used to working full time aren't you – that must have taught you some time management?

T: Yes it has but it's not like, say I go there at nine o'clock and sit down and that's about it. Here – it's different, I didn't have to shop for food, cook my meals, keep a house clean but here you have so many responsibilities – I need to go to lectures, I need to cook food, I need to do this and that – it's very complicated – in my time management I need to prioritise, so I need to do this and this but first I have to do this. Now I have a plan – every hour what am I doing, in this way I have been covering all the stuff – oh yes it has improved a lot – I plan for a month now. So now I know, if someone asks me are you free at this time, I can say yes, no, I'll get back to you – I have a set plan now. That's a good lesson from here.

DG: So that's a good life skill, any other life skills you've acquired?

T: Waking up early – waking up at this time, you have to do it whether you like it or not and also doing your work – making sure that your work is being done that again is a responsibility because see if you are given lecture notes then you have to read them, you have to keep up to date so that's like a responsibility. At work I also have extra responsibility – at work I started out on check-outs but then there was an opening and I went for an interview and I moved up to team leader and now the responsibilities are higher. They expect more from me and they want me to manage the staff on the checkouts and other than that, other responsibilities to do with the staff. That is a new exposure. I have been working before but the amount of new people I have been working with is less. Here every single person is different, especially in the UK actually. Today they will be extremely helpful and tomorrow they will be like a nasty monster and I will be like wow where did that come from? It's like that – it's quite good because I learn more. Also at the beginning I found it difficult to communicate with people because Stoke English is hard but now I think I talk like that – I can understand them much more better. Even if they are not being polite, I am able to communicate with them – I can explain to them and then they understand.

DG: So you've developed a lot of communication skills and personal skills. What about here at the University, what academic skills do you think you have developed?

T: I think the PASS module was really helpful because not only communications, the learning skills, referencing, all that module, all those methods have helped me to identify my key strengths – I knew that I was a good listener and a reader. Now I know a lot more about international business so now I can say to my father, this is how you are supposed to do international business – make sure that that you know,

don't wait for the last minute to things – I have been taught how you should put bids in in advance, what risks to take and all that stuff.

DG: So having learned all this from work, from University and from being here – what difference do you think that will make when you go back to Sri Lanka to work?

T: I think it will make me very positive and confident but I still have a fear, you know like when I was back home and I used to give presentations to directors and people like that, I fear that I might know less or I might make a mistake. So I learn here that even if I make a mistake, you learn from it – that's the real learning. So you have confidence so that whatever happens I know that I have good ideas – I used to be so afraid to give them out, but here I think no I have good ideas and it is acceptable to talk about them. Ideas can come from anyone, not just the top of the company – that's the kind of confidence that even when I am back home, I can push through that and also to that I would like to add in that I went to work in a school for an internship and wow that was completely different.

DG: Was that a primary school or a high school?

T: A high school.

DG: Ok so that was older children. How long was that for?

T: For fifteen days – with an associate scheme, I applied through it and was successful.

DG: So that was a local high school?

T: Yes.

DG: So what were you doing there?

T: I was helping in the classrooms and I was also there to talk to the children about higher education, about pursuing higher education – giving them ideas about what they should be doing.

DG: And how did you find that?

T: It was a bit tough – those kids were tough. Because they have this attitude of come on tell me about it, why should I? I even spoke to the teachers, why are they having an attitude like that, they say it is their parents. So they think it's like I can live on benefits and I don't need to work – now that is a bad thing. So breaking that attitude is quite hard. They asked me to work with the nastiest boy in the school – that's what they called him, the nastiest boy in the school. He is quite bright but he is also quite stubborn – I had to shadow him for a week. He made me tired, he didn't want me to sit next to him or anything for the first two days – then he opened up, I mean I think that is the first time he has done this. He used to have special teachers and mentors for him and he never opened up so opening up to me was quite good. He always ask me, he wants me to bring him something like a tip, if you want me to do this then I need this and he loves sweets but then he wanted them for breakfast and I said to him you cannot have them for breakfast and he said I don't like anything else so I said to him I am sure you can think of something else – so he likes cereal bars and so I bought him some cereal bars. So it's nice. At the beginning I was so scared to go into that school, I was so scared.

DG: Yes I'm sure – I wouldn't want to teach in a secondary school – definitely not.

T: I went in and it was like a complete different world in there. Completely different.

DG: So do you think you might want to go into teaching?

T: I am thinking about the GTP – someone has told me about it – for maths.

294

DG: Yes there is a real need for good maths teachers.

T: The problem is the PGCE – it is very expensive for international students, £7,000 but I have contacted the TDA and I am talking to them. Unfortunately the school I was working at, they are merging with another school and so they won't have space for me but they can recommend me to St. Thomas'. So I am looking forward to that but not a lot of high hopes for that. I have learned different levels of experience – how to communicate with youngsters.

DG: All these experiences, you've talked there about how you think it's going to affect your work – wherever you work and whatever you do – do you think it will affect your personal life as well?

T: Yes to an extent because back home I had no responsibilities – my mum would do everything, I did not even wash my clothes, now I think about it! Now I just know when have to submit my last assignment and so I am so stressed, I started to panic – feeling ill, diarrhoea, losing weight and I collapsed, on my way to the University with the assignment and so I was late, anyway at that time I felt like so much conflict, I wanna go back home but then I thought even if I go home it's going to be a shock for people – the way I am now and the way I used to be.

DG: Why do you think they will think you have changed?

T: Because like now when I talk to my mum she says I am talking like a twenty five year old woman – because I tell her all the things I have done and all the things I have to do and back home I used to be a time waster. I always used to put things for later on, later on, push it off but now because I've been living alone I can't do that so that is a good thing. A bad thing is in my community especially they still believe that you have to get married in this way and they think that girls should less talk, not be that open-minded and stuff like that. So this change could come up with some clashes like that.

DG: Ok - you said that completing assignments was stressful – where there any other times of the year when you felt particularly stressed?

T: When we went to Buxton I thought it was too much all the week.

DG: Yes it's very intensive isn't it?

T: Yes because it's a very short period of time and there is so much work to do and you need to handle a team, you know we had a lot of Chinese and you need to communicate with them, we need to make them understand things and stuff like that. Some of them are like so rigid, they are so young – some of them are just 18 or 19 – I wonder how they got into MBA at all.

D: I think they will at least be at least early 20s because almost all will have a first degree.

T: I think some of them might get their first degree very young maybe eighteen and then they come without work experience, they are still like kids and stuff like that. Some of them are older but they are rigid, they don't want to be flexible especially in Buxton. Some of the are quite – some of them they do have work experience but some of them are so rigid, they say just because Carole says it, why should we do it - I say she is just trying to give us a taste of the real world environment so why don't you just take it that way – so what happened, I think this is a mistake of mine, if you don't want to do it then fine I will do it myself – at the end of the day someone has to do it and it was so stressful for me. On the last day we had to do a presentation and

295

the evening before I was sick – I was throwing up because of the stress and Carole said to me don't do it if it is making you feel so stressed and I said no, I have to do it, I want to experience every minute. I have never been stressed that much.

DG: So that was a difficult time – what about a time that was particularly good?

T: Oh wow – in the second semester we had Prague and we could choose our own team – that was a great thing – we knew each other and we knew our strengths and weaknesses – I led a team of six people, one of them was a Chinese so I wanted a variety so there were two Sri Lankans, one Chinese, one British and a Nigerian – so we did have a mix. So from the beginning we get up on time, we do things on time, we ask questions – that started from here, then we went to Prague and when we came back we did a presentation here – we liked working like that, so that was a very good experience. Most of this was marketing and it was great to have Fatimah there – she was like a mini – no like a big marketing encyclopaedia, with lots of new ideas and she has this thing like marketing students are like her children and she wants us to do good kind of thing – so she put stress on us so I think that's good – she does some pushing but we enjoyed it.

DG: So have you had your results from the second semester yet?

T: Yes we have had some of them we have.

DG: How do you feel about your results overall?

T: Overall think I am on a merit. But some of them, like strategy, I barely passed – unfortunately in the first semester for marketing, I went off tangent and failed.

DG: So you will have to resit that?

T: Yeah – I was in tears because I had a great lecturer and it was my favourite module and I failed that.

DG: Do you know where you went wrong?

T: Yes – immediately when I went through the paper with the lecturer I knew where I had gone wrong so that is something that I took through to the second semester – to let the tutor see the work before you hand it in so they can give you feedback – that is one of the biggest learnings I took to the second semester. For the assignment for the international study tour I showed Fatimah my work and she said yeah – you could improve this bit of my assignment, so I managed to get that through – I missed a distinction by one mark.

DG: If you were to go home and talk to friends informally what would you say was the best and worst thing about being here for a year?

T: The best thing I would say is like I told you before, every day is a new lesson, a new experience, and that you just can't – you can't get immediately – you need enough time to explore everything and anything so I have learned a lot – so that is one of the good things. The bad thing is – I wouldn't say it is a bad thing – everyone had this theory, everyone, including my Mum, that when I came back, when I came here that I would get into drinking, smoking, going out with people – and she has this fear – I said to her it is up to the individual how they want to take their life – it did not affect me – it might for another person – the weaker amongst us could be influenced by this environment – some people are like after six o'clock, I don't want to do anything – they just want to get in the bar and drink.

DG: Not everybody?

T: No – but most of them, they say after six I need to go to the bar to have a drink and watch soccer, that's what they like – so you can get into that habit. I don't really see any bad experiences - unless you are not prepared – you need to be confident – I am not going to do this and you need to be extremely flexible.

DG: So you are working in Sainsbury's – what twenty hours a week?

T: Yes twenty hours but from now on, I think because it is summertime, I can work full time.

DG: Are you interested in retail then or did you just take this on as a part time job to get some money?

T: At the beginning I took it as a part time job because I was applying for marketing but it didn't come through so I thought why don't I give this a try – at the end of the day it doesn't matter because it's a part time job – once in a while I also do mystery shopping so that is also an experience. Then later on I thought that I have experience in marketing, I have experience in the educational sector, I also have experience in the public sector so working in the retail sector would be different – so that's what I thought when I applied for the job of team leader and the amount of responsibility they give you, the amount of training they give you is awesome. They are sending me for training now in health and safety – advanced level and they are also sponsoring my NVQ on team leader – so the amount of training that they give for their staff is massive. I felt that that is really good and she said to me that you could do this as your placement – or for your dissertation – you can interview people.

DG: So you are thinking of doing a placement?

T: Yes I am – for a year – because they are giving me that immense amount of responsibility – so that is very good experience – and so by the 1st of September I should know if I have a placement.

DG: Do you think it's made a difference living in a private house and not in halls of residence?

T: I think so – because I have seen my friends and their responsibilities are less – they worry less.

DG: Yes they don't have to worry about bills – that is all included.

T: Yes it's included – not only about bills but it's just a small room that they have to worry about. One of my friends, a Nigerian girl was in one of the flats and she had to leave because she couldn't take the noise and she said the whole apartment – every night they partied. Thank god it was not me because I could not have tolerated it – I am the sort of person who would have opened the door and screamed.

DG: So do you think in some ways it is better but in some ways it is worse?

T: In some ways there is much less responsibility so that is better and in some ways worse – everything is not under your control.

DG: So you're working part time and studying so what about your social life?

T: It's been quite good because like I told you sometimes I do mystery shopping and mostly it's late at night. I never used to go to like disco clubs or night clubs or anything like that but I wanted to have that experience – what happens in a nightclub – I still don't know. Sometimes we go to the Ember Lounge and have a drink and watch a match or something like that. I have been to Manchester – to Trafford Park mall and I have also been to the football ground – don't ask me why – one of my friends is a great fan of that and he was like I should take you there to see that – so

297

that was really nice as it had a story about how the team was formed – so that was interesting, at first I was not interested in football but later on I became a football fan.

DG: So have you been home at all over the whole year or has anyone been to visit you?

T: No I haven't been home but they are coming at the end of July – so I am hoping they will come, I am counting days actually.

DG: When we spoke in autumn you mentioned that your Mum was finding your being away quite difficult and she was getting upset – has that improved?

T: Yes it's improved, I think she's got used to it and now also she has diverted herself in doing other things, she's taking a course at the British Council to learn English because she can read and write in English but her spoken English, she is shy – I am telling her how many people her age here are doing their first degree and she is saying are they – ok then I will do it. So we managed to get her occupied with that stuff.

DG: How have you found working with students from different nationalities?

T: It was difficult at the beginning because everyone had their own, even if they are speaking English, they had their own way of talking English and it was quite difficult. The one good thing is everyone understood my English – my friend from Nigeria who speaks very fast – she thinks my English is very clear. At the same time, Chinese, who could not speak English at all – so it helped me to mingle much more better than everyone and also I could help explain things to them – so to do that I need to know about it. I have a Chinese friend and she was completely off, she did not know a single word of English when she came here. She was at the back of the class, I can still remember seeing her, lying down and not speaking and I remember thinking oh my god is she in my group! She was in my group and I got to know her through that and I had to explain to her, I had to go little by little, she had an electronic translator but I had to say to her, that's not going to help you every time – you have to speak all the time. I went back to her place and we did work together and I had to explain things to her then she checks with me and gradually she improves.

DG: When we spoke in autumn you said that you hoped that working with students from different cultures would help you understand their cultures – do you think that's happened?

T: It has happened a lot I think – I mean it helped me to map from each country – every culture is different and it made me understand how are these people through business dealings. For Chinese they don't look need personal space when they talk but for Sri Lankans this is important, for Indians they don't care – also when you are talking to them the tone – the tone they would prefer and also just because they do not smile it does not mean that they do not like you.

DG: Do you think you made the right decision coming here?

T: Yes – in fact I made a lot of other people I know who went to other universities feel bad because there is so much work, it feels like a crash course but there is also so much experience and when you are discussing with some of your friends – I did this, I did that, this is what I have learned, they are like ok we have read some books – but the experience is different.

DG: Would you recommend coming here to a friend?

T: Yes – I think I have already influenced people who are at Keele doing their bachelors to do their postgraduate here. When I first came it was ranked in the 80s and now it is ranked in the 50s and so people have said oh you are climbing up the ranks – my first degree was also from Midlands University and also I am thinking of doing my DBA here.

DG: Yes – it's being developed here this year.

TP: So if the DBA comes here then I will apply for it.

DG: Ok – have you made friends with people here who you think you will stay in contact with when you go home?

T: I think I have about 60 or 65 so yes it is going to be quite difficult to keep in contact – everyone, thanks to Facebook, it will keep all of us in contact – we already have a group on Facebook – MBA Midlands University international sort of thing – if someone is for example going to India they inform us immediately.

DG: What do you think about the way you have been taught here – how does it compare to your previous experience in Sri Lanka?

T: More independent learning is required here – there everything is spoon-fed. The main problem is that if you don't get the proper lecturer – I was a little worried about that because I had a problem with supply chain – I didn't understand. I read the books and the articles and they helped me. In strategy I was reading and reading and I still couldn't understand the models. Even most of my friends they could not understand it so they could not explain it, we were all so confused. So we went to the lecturer and we asked some questions, the way he explained it we couldn't understand and we kept saying to him that we didn't understand. He did get so annoyed – he said read and you will understand – so that's the time you say ok, I cannot approach that person again and then for most of us, our worst mark was in strategy.

DG: So you've mentioned a number of teaching staff that you've come into contact with and some of them are very helpful and some of them are not – would that be fair?

T: Yes.

DG: Ok – have you any concerns about completing the course, about completing the dissertation?

T: Well I would like to complete it like this year but obviously if I get a placement it will be another year – if I get offered a placement then I should not let it go as it's an opportunity for more experience.

DG: When you come to leave the UK, how do you think you will feel?

T: Mmmnn … I haven't thought about it. I have enjoyed it – I have enjoyed every bit of it.

DG: What do you think you might miss?

T: Mmmnnn … the busy life and I can go to London and stuff – I went to London for three days and I wanted to come back – Midlands University is like home for me now. I like the environment, it's not the most happening place, it can be a quiet and boring place but the people here are quite friendly, very friendly, they care about each other and that's very important – it's a community, I think I would miss that, I feel like a Stokie!

DG: Are you concerned about going home?

T: Not concerned – I would say probably because now that I am used to a different environment. When I go there it will take some time for me to settle down – that will take a long time and also I have changed but I can't make them change, I can change – so I don't know how they will take the changes. So ok probably if I am happy with this environment then I will probably want to stay here, I mean obviously I am already looking into after finishing my degree here, getting another two years of work experience here because here again in terms of technology, in terms of everything, everything is an advance so I can learn more and more. So every day I can learn more and that is what I wanted to do. I have seen some part of the UK so now maybe I want to go to some other country to see how they work – I still haven't made a decision on that – if I get an opportunity.

DG: When you get home do you think your friends and your family will have expectations of you?

T: Mmmnnn – my friends, I don't think they have specific expectations but my family yes, they might have expectations – already they are like ok so when are you getting married? They tell me you can do your DBA later when you have time, now you need to get married, they say already you are four years behind, terrible isn't it! So that's what their worry is – so I need to fulfil that – they have fulfilled my dreams, it is now my time to fulfil their dreams and they think that the only way for me to fulfil their dreams is for me to get married. I have to meet that expectation of theirs and another thing would be how the others are going to take in my changes.

DG: So perhaps because you have been in contact with your parents it will not be such a big surprise for your family but what sort of changes do you think they will find?

T: Probably being more spoken out and I am already becoming more environmentally conscious – oh yes from 2009 to 2010, I am the environmental officer for the Students Union and I have been speaking to the City Council and they have a particular fund so they have been asking me what the University has been doing about being environmentally friendly so I have made a report from him and I might do a project for him. So when I go home I will want to do something similar but they will go no no – it might create problems because they do not like people who bring things forward because they think it will create problems.

DG: So do you think gender is regarded differently in Sri Lanka?

T: Not in Sri Lanka but in the specific community of ours.

DG: Right ok …

T: Because in our particular family, we are from India, I was born in India – we were just brought up in Sri Lanka so our community do not want to be open to the Sri Lankan community.

DG: So do you think you have had to adapt to living in the UK?

T: Yes, to an extent, yes. For instance, when I came here, the way I was obviously didn't help me to go a long way, I needed to do some changes. I had to, for example I can't just say that I am sick and go back home – no-one will look after me – you need to take care of yourself and at the same time you need to act responsibly – if you are not going somewhere you need to tell people – back home you do not have to do that – here you cannot do that so you need to adapt to an extent. It's a cultural thing and also people get very offended if you don't turn up, including your friends. I

300

mean I just did that once and I did see them get extremely upset so I said ok come on I am sorry and it won't happen again. I had to do that because I told them I was coming and I couldn't make it, I was just too tired and I couldn't make it and I didn't inform them but back home they expect things like that, even they do things like that and I do that so it's part of us, they will understand that something came up and that's why she didn't come. Here it's not like that, you can't do things like that so you need to understand that you are not just losing your time on a particular thing, it's also everyone else's time so you need to adapt.

DG: When we talked in autumn, even though you had only been here for a short time you said you were very conscious of your voice and you thought that you were quite loud perhaps, you felt your voice was loud and you deliberately lowered it?

T: Yes but now I am just being loud again because they like me being loud, they say because you are small they cannot see me so at least your voice can be heard. Even in Sainsbury's they have this question of can she handle it kind of thing – the tone, the way I speak so they know I can handle these things. I suppose to an extent it was the way I spoke – quite confidently and loud. So for example with Think 21, if I don't think someone is 21 then I have to say no you cannot have it, I am extremely sorry. I have been quite aggressive to some customers at times because they have been quite aggressive and they say no you have to serve me because they come with an ID but the person they are with does not have an ID. They say I am buying it for me and I have ID but I have to say I am sorry you are coming in with someone else who I think is underage, so some time there is confrontation. At the beginning I thought I was being unfriendly to them but then I thought no I am doing a good thing for them as well as for me. Just take away that mask and throw it out and be what you are. The environment has helped me out to do that because everywhere in Stoke they always ask the question are you alright. At the beginning I ask myself why do they keep asking this question but when you answer that question you naturally become alright.

DG: When you go back to Sri Lanka after doing whatever you are going to do here what kind of work do you think you might do?

T: I am looking into a managerial post with my MBA, various people might say think I want to get into marketing and that is what I am going to stick to but now it's not like that, I am open to any marketing or industry or any managerial experience, anything because that's gonna teach you different things, not stick to one thing. You need to know about every industry because now every industry is inter-linked – if I am gonna become a teacher then I need to know about every industry and for that I need that experience so I think I shouldn't be fixed to one particular thing.

DG: Do you think you'll work for an international company?

T: Yes I have to work for an international company so it puts me into a different exposure. If I stick with a local company then I can get myself stagnated.

Annex 3 Summaries of transcripts

Annex 3a) Vish summary – autumn 2008

Vishnu is a confident 24 year old from Bangalore. He spoke good English and evidenced a good social life and clear plans to make the most of his free time while in the UK. He has a first degree in commerce and had recently worked for Deutsche Bank, reconciling portfolios for two years. This is a back office role and he felt that in order to progress, he would need further qualifications. He chose Midlands University as he could complete his MBA in the quickest time and it offered a specialist finance route; in addition he was attracted by the option of an industrial placement and the relatively low cost of living.

Vishnu noted the emotional and financial support of his parents through his life: *"I still depend on them and they force me much to do this year rather than postponing for another year".* There is a sense of urgency in some of the transcripts for those students who have not yet married – as though postgraduate study overseas is something which it is preferable to have completed prior to marriage, or perhaps in some cultures it will enhance the marriage prospects?

His father was an owner/manager of a real estate and brick manufacturing company but he indicated that his father did not want him to follow him into the business as he felt the market was very competitive. His mother was a home maker and he commented that he missed her cooking, although she had made some food which he had brought with him. As the only son in the family I asked if he felt under pressure: *"… no they don't pressurise me, they just see my future, they have their own future set for us but they say it is your future and you need to take care of that".* His parents called him daily: *"… they love me so much"* and he was in regular email contact with other family members and friends.

Vishnu was interested in gaining a placement as he felt it would help him to: *"… be getting a hang of how we should be behaving in an international culture",* perhaps implying that he felt that he personally was unfamiliar with behaviour protocols. Advice concerning studying in the UK has been sought from friends with relevant experiences and an agent who offered visa support. He expressed a long term interest in cars and motorbikes, owning a Royal Enfield in India. He planned to spend some of his free time pursuing this interest by attending relevant events such as motorcycle rallies. He also expressed an interest in travel and he had undertaken a number of vacations with friends.

Vishnu observed the more independent, student-centred teaching methods and how different they were from his previous experiences but he was confident that he would be able to adapt. He sympathised with Chinese students who he thought found listening to English lectures very difficult. He was resident in halls and enjoyed meeting different people and was involved in cooking group meals for friends: *"… we spend most of our time in the kitchen space, talking to each other".*

Vishnu's only assessment experience was with examinations and as such he was concerned about different forms of assessment, particularly assignments but he already had presentation experience through work and he felt this would be advantageous. When asked if he felt the experience would change him, he remarked: *"… yes – definitely – I hope that should happen"*, he then went on to elaborate that he actually meant increased confidence in talking to people and enhanced business knowledge. When asked if he thought it would change him on a personal level he said that he was making friends with girls which he had not done previously, due to cultural mores in India.

Vishnu considered that the core advantage of undertaking an overseas MBA was that it was preferred by Indian finance organisations as many of their clients are from western countries and as such organisations were having to change: *"… we need a global culture"*.

Vishnu was impressed by the friendliness of people and he considered that British people were very sociable. However, he did note that one of his Nigerian friends had recently been subjected to verbal racial abuse, he thought this was an unusual incident. He had been surprised by becoming friends with Muslim students from Pakistan as that would not normally happen in India: *"I thought right this is a political issue which is happening back home not a personal issue – so that's one good thing here I think"*.

Pick up in interview 2:

- Are you still planning to get a placement?
- Did you attend extra English classes?
- Do you still think you might go back to your former employer?
- How do you feel about working in teams with other international students?
- Have you managed to get to any car or bike rallies?
- Have you been to any other places?
- You were concerned about your communication and presentation skills – how do you feel about them now?
- You mentioned gender awareness last time – do you have friends who are girls?

Annex 3b) Nancy summary – autumn 2008

Nancy is the oldest participant at 40, she is an English language teacher and she is a vice dean at her university, where she has spent her entire career. She is one of the Peking contingent. It is assumed that she has high level Communist Party connections (her husband is one level away from a vice mayor) as she has two daughters aged sixteen and a younger one aged nine who she had brought to the UK with her. She was anxious for me to understand that she did not come from a typical Chinese family, all her immediate family were English speakers. Both she and her husband had travelled outside China and her eldest daughter had spent six months living in France as part of an exchange programme: *"In my family we share, we do a lot of sharing and we travel a lot and my family members give each other more freedom but most Chinese family, everybody they are just very tight with each other – very close, we are close but we give a lot of freedom to each other".*

Nancy had chosen to study English in the mid-80s in China: *"… at that time people in China, very few can speak English, very few and everybody thought learning English will be having a kind of bigger vision and more ways to understand another culture and understand the world better".* She defined the Peking contract as a "talent" project and she felt it was an honour to be selected. Her motivation was clear: *"I need to learn more things and also the majority of us after graduation will be promoted … when I come back maybe definitely I will be a dean".* As such, inclusion in the project to study for an MBA at Midlands University, seems to be considered a fast track career progression opportunity.

In addition to leaving behind a husband and sixteen year old daughter, Nancy had left behind elderly parents and she became visibly upset when I asked how they had responded to her departure. The cost of an interim visit was prohibitive but regular contact was maintained. Nancy was surprised by the variety in accents and in particular found students and staff from India difficult to understand. Given that Nancy is an academic with twenty years' experience, the following comment implies a surprisingly superficial approach to studying business at post graduate level: *"… the learning content itself is not that difficult, we understand but we just, we are worried about our English, whether our English will be enough to finish the assignments. If the assignments could be done in Chinese everybody will have perfect marks".* Nancy shared the disappointment of other participants that their peers did not come from a greater variety of countries and again expressed concern: *"… most of our classmates are speaking Indian English … that's our disappointment".*

Nancy had no experience of completing assignments and this was another concern. She anticipated that the experience of writing assignments would improve her teaching: *"I will learn MBA courses and different teaching style, I watch the teachers to teach because every teacher have their own advantages and I can learn from them … I think I am very honoured to have been given this opportunity".*

The issue of concern about people from India appeared to be a recurring theme for Nancy.   When asked about interactions with the local community, Nancy replied: *"I do not have any discrimination about the Indians but we just feel we are surrounded by Indians here … everywhere, everywhere, too many Indians here, we cannot distinguish who is from Pakistan, they are all the same".* Clearly there are significant cultural and linguistic differences between Chinese students and those from the Indian sub-continent. This has manifested itself in various comments, the strongest being the above from Nancy. It will be interesting to explore this issue in the follow up interviews to determine whether there have been any changes in these perceptions or whether the intervening six months have served to reinforce these views.

When asked about British culture, despite having proficient language skills and being a relatively frequent traveller, Nancy recognised that: *"I think I need to understand the culture, I need to understand the people here and I need to follow the rules here"*. This once again identified a sense of difference and the need to conform in order to maintain harmony, a key Confucian value.

Pick up in interview 2:

- Do you think you have had a different experience because you are part of a group? What have been the positive and negative aspects of this?
- You though that the content of your modules was not that difficult – is that still your view?
- How has having your nine year old daughter with you made a difference?
- How do you think living in England has influenced your understanding of English?
- Do you know what job you will be doing when you return home?
- Do you think you might consider leaving the government?
- Concern re: number of students from the Indian sub-continent?

Annex 4: Communication with participants

Appendix 4a: Initial email to PG students to request participation

From: GILLILAND Debbie
Sent: Thu 02/10/2008 12:20

Subject: All new international postgraduate students only

This email is for the attention of all new international postgraduate students:

Hello

My name is Debbie and I work here in the Business School as a principal lecturer and manager – I had an opportunity to briefly speak to you yesterday. For my education doctorate work, I want to try to understand international postgraduate student experiences here in the Business School.

As part of my research I need to talk with international students and this is where you can help. I would like to speak with international students twice in this academic year: once in the next few weeks and once towards the end of the academic year. This would involve one to one discussions for around one hour each time. The time and date can be arranged to suit your commitments.

To thank you for your time I will be offering a £10 book token (which can be exchanged in most good book shops and at the University bookshop, for books) to those who participate in discussions in the next few weeks and a further £10 book token to those who participate in the second discussion in early summer – I would like to speak to 10 students so the first 10 who respond to this email will be included in the research.

I do hope that you can help with this research - I assure you that the content of our discussion will be confidential and will not be discussed with anyone in the Business School.

I do hope you enjoy your time here with us at the Business School and very best wishes for your studies this year.

Debbie Gilliland,
International Manager and Principal Lecturer,

Annex 4b: Response email to students expressing an interest in participating

From: GILLILAND Debbie
Sent: Mon 06/10/2008 08:46

Subject: RE: All new international postgraduate students only

Thank you so much for replying to my email and agreeing to help with my research - I am delighted. The purpose of this email is to provide you with further information and arrange our discussion.

Within the Business School, I am responsible for managing partnerships with various international colleges and universities across the world and as such it seems appropriate for me to conduct research into how students feel when they come to the University to study and then compare this to their feelings towards the end of their course. I have chosen to try to obtain this information by talking to international postgraduate students like you.

The content of the discussions will be confidential and will not be discussed with anyone at the Business School. I would very much like to audio record our discussion (because I cannot write very fast!) and if you agree to this, once again I assure you that this will remain confidential and will be securely stored. When writing up my research findings, all students will be anonymous so that no other person will be able to identify you.

I would very much like to have two discussions with you - one in the next few weeks and then another towards the end of your academic year. By speaking to you twice, I hope to be able to compare your perceptions and experiences at the beginning of your time here with us and then again towards the end of your course.

I appreciate that students have very busy lives and as such I am happy to see you whenever you have free time - if you could please let me know your availability for the next 2 weeks, then I will email you back with a confirmed date, time and place.

I very much look forward to meeting you and to thank you for your time, I will be pleased to give you a £10 book token at the end of our first discussion and a further £10 book token at the end of our second discussion in early summer.

I hope to hear from you very shortly.

Kind regards
Debbie

Annex 4c: Interview agreement

I agree to participate in the research study of Debbie Gilliland.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to support the completion of a doctoral thesis concerned with international post graduate student experiences at Midlands University Business School.

I am participating voluntarily and I grant permission for the data to be used in the doctoral thesis and any future publication. I understand that my name and other demographic information which might identify me will not be used.

I agree to meet for an initial discussion in the early part of this semester, at a mutually agreed time and place and I will be available for a second discussion towards the end of the academic year, again at a mutually agreed time and place.

I also grant permission for the audio recording of the discussion and understand that all data will be anonymised and recordings will be kept secure. During the discussion I understand that I can refuse to answer questions. I can request a transcript of the interview.

Signed:

Printed name:

Date:

Annex 5: Ethics approval form

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY
FAST-TRACK ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM (STAFF)
Faculty of Business & Law

Title of project _____ INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Name of researcher(s) __ DEBBIE GILLILAND

Date __ 12/05/08

Please seek guidance from the Chair of your Faculty Ethics Committee if you are uncertain about any ethical issue arising from this application.

		YES	NO	N/A
1	Will you describe the main procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	✓		
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	✓		
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	✓		
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?			✓
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	✓		
6	With questionnaires and interviews, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	✓		
7	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	✓		
8	Will you give participants the opportunity to be debriefed i.e. to find out more about the study and its results?	✓		

If you have ticked **No** to any of Q1-8, you should complete and submit the Full Ethics Approval Form

		YES	NO	N/A
9	Will your project deliberately mislead participants in any way?		✓	
10	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?		✓	
11	Is the nature of the research such that contentious or sensitive issues might be involved?		✓	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 9, 10 or 11 you should complete the Full Ethics Approval Form. In relation to question 10 this should include details of what you will tell participants to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help). You may also need to consider risk assessment issues.

			YES	NO	N/A
12	Does your project involve work with animals?			✓	
13	Do participants fall into any of the following special groups? **Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).**	Children (under 18 years of age)			
		People with communication or learning difficulties			
		Patients			
		People in custody			
		People who could be regarded as vulnerable		✓	
		People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)			

14	Does the project involve external funding or external collaboration where the funding body or external collaborative partner requires the University to provide evidence that the project had been subject to ethical scrutiny?		✓	

If you have ticked **Yes** to 12, 13 or 14 you should complete and submit the Full Ethics Approval Form
There is an obligation to bring to the attention of the Faculty Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

If you have ticked **Yes** to 13 and your participants are **patients** you should follow the Guidelines for Ethical Approval of NHS Projects

PLEASE **PROVIDE THE DETAILS REQUIRED** IN SUPPORT OF YOUR APPLICATION. THEN SIGN THE FORM.

Please tick

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring a full ethics submission to the Faculty Ethics Panel	✓

Give a brief description of participants and procedure (methods, tests used etc) in up to 150 words.

Participants: International full time MBA students, enrolling in September 2008

Procedure: Interviews in Sept/Oct and again at the end of teaching May/June — these will be semi-structured and audio recorded

Signed... Dgilliland ... ... Print Name... DEBBIE GILLILAND. ... Date... 12/05/08
(Lead Researcher)

PLEASE FORWARD A COPY OF THIS FORM TO THE CHAIR OF YOUR FACULTY ETHICS PANEL

Form Received by Chair of Faculty Ethics Panel

Signed. DDouglas ... Print Name... D. DOUGLAS ... Date... 23rd May 2008
(Chair, Faculty Ethics Panel)

Approved