Transnational Journeys: Changing Identities, Perceptions and Experiences of Malaysian Doctoral Students Studying in the UK

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Abstract

The main questions that the present study seeks to answer are why and how do Malaysian international doctoral students experience their living and learning experiences in the UK, particularly in Scotland, United Kingdom. The study explores participants' motivations, experiences and future trajectories through Bourdieuian social theory and through the lens of transnational theory. An interpretative, multiple qualitative methodology was used, including semi-structured interviews, email interviews, and online narratives, to explore the participants' experiences as sojourners.

The study found that Malaysian doctoral students pursued their study abroad for the purpose of acquiring a wide range of formal and informal knowledge, as well as for the benefits of self and others. The participants' microlevel experiences suggest that their 'habitus' are fluid, and they are constantly renegotiating their knowledge, perceptions and identities. They also portrayed reflexivity in negotiating their perceptions and experiences by drawing upon previous and present knowledge from both their home and host countries when abroad. It was also found that the participants' future career pathways and mobility imaginings are influenced relationally by not only family and employment obligations but, also, present experiences as globalized transnational individuals, and also changing mobility imaginings that are bounded by 'assemblages of powers' (Robertson, 2013) of both their home and host countries. Finally, the findings suggest a range of intersectional nuances of experience in relation to social identity dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and religion.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Nuramira Binti Anuar
Signature:

List of Abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
L2	Second Language
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics
SU	Status Update
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Chapter 1

Introduction to the thesis

1.1 Introduction

International education has become an established avenue for international students to accumulate a variety of forms of advantage, or 'capital', particularly in the contemporary globalized economy. Since World War II, we could see the higher education landscape in the UK has become increasingly diverse with multi ethnicity and cultures. With international students seeking for various capital forms in the UK, this movement further painted a multicultural and ethnic UK. In today's 'network society' as termed by Castells (1996), technologies such as the internet and social media fuel potential students' imaginings of what international education could offer. According to Rizvi, international students already come with expectations of what their international education would be like before their sojourn, as a result of the influence of today's technology. The gains of international education are potentially two-fold, in which it may benefit the international students but, also, the economy of the hosting countries (Gargano, 2008; Knight, 2012).

In terms of the former, various studies (Bracht et al., 2006; Souto-Otero et al., 2013) report that for the individuals who have received international education, they benefit in terms of developing themselves personally and also in terms of the significant advantages in terms of their employability. According to Rizvi (2000), Malaysian employers hold a high perception of those who have graduated overseas, for not only the academic qualification but, also, the experience that they have potentially gained during their sojourn. The experience that the students gain from studying overseas is also seen to provide 'survival skills' and they are regarded as being able to adapt better to different environments, which benefits the sojourners in the transnational labour markets as well.

Besides the international students' gains from their sojourn, due to the host countries' gains in terms of economy, higher education is perceived as under the influence of the contemporary neoliberalism agenda (Marginson, 2007). In recent years, HE institutions

have observed the rise of neoliberal ‘academic capitalism’, in which policies and practices are introduced and influenced by market and market-like behaviours (Slaughter ad Rhoades, 2004). This includes the development of global ranking systems as a process of HE globalisation (Kehm and Stensaker, 2009). The practices and policies are directed towards HE institutions’ movements toward education, research and services that generate income, consequently changing the relationship between national states and HE institutions, and between HE institutions and private organisations (Marginson, 2007). This means, the prime focus for higher education tends to be towards generating revenue through the construction of ‘intellectual property’, as part of the ‘global knowledge economy’ (Marginson, 2007).

In discussing the dynamics of higher education policies and practices in this globalised economy, it is important to bring the voices of the international students themselves to be part of these discourses. As international students from various geographical localities are influenced by their own unique histories of their own home countries, as well as linked to the host countries of their sojourn, and in the contemporary setting, linked globally at the same time, their experiences are embedded in multiple spatial socio-cultural and political contexts, and this ‘transnationality’ is highly relevant to understanding the complexity of these processes.

On the subject of internationalisation of higher education, it is imperative to define the type of student sojourn (or journey) abroad that we are discussing, to avoid any generalisation or ambiguity. According to Knight (2012, p. 25), among the different types of sojourn experience are: 1) full degree programme in a foreign country, 2) short-term study-abroad experience as part of a degree programme at a home institution, 3) cross-border collaborative degree programmes between two or more institutions or providers, 4) research and fieldwork abroad, 5) internships and practical experiences and, finally, 6) study tours and workshops abroad. The distinctions between these programmes entail contrasting experiences — to a greater or lesser extent.

All types of mobility experience mentioned offer students various amounts of understanding and knowledge with the host countries in which diverse programmes and activities are being carried out. Perhaps the richest form of experience that an individual can benefit from, for the reason of the length of duration with the host country and contact with the host environment, would be the first mentioned which is a full degree programme. As defined by Knight (2012), this would involve students who study at the host institution from which they would be awarded the degree and require the students to move to a foreign land where they are addressed as international,

foreign or visa students. The mobility of these students encourages interactions between various countries for cultural exchange and also potentially creates opportunities for the workforce of these countries (Chow and Bhandari, 2011). Evidently, these programmes not only encourage international education at an individual level for personal advancement but also have a global impact on a larger scale.

This present study draws inspiration from two other studies, Fazal Rizvi's (2005) and Terra Gargano's (2009), which both utilise a 'transnational' lens to explore the experiences of international students. Transnationalism, according to Vertovec (1999), is defined as 'being here and there' and 'home away from home' at the same time (p. 5). This framework allows us to interrogate the experiences of international students by exploring how these experiences are embedded in the 'transnational spaces' between the sojourners' home and host countries.

The present study will be adopting a transnational lens in studying the experience of international doctoral students from Malaysia, especially through their 'micro-level' lived experiences during their sojourn in the UK. As previous studies in the field tend to focus on undergraduate students (and/or the economic gains and policy implications of international student migration), by focusing on the experience of doctoral students, it is hoped that this research will add to the existing literature surrounding the topic (Bilecen, 2013; Lillyman and Bennett, 2014).

There is a particular symbolic status attached to a PhD degree itself. Philosophy, in Greek, is a compound word in which 'Philos'[1] means 'love' and 'Sophia' means 'the 'wisdom', hence 'the love for wisdom'. Rizvi (2010) argues that, for doctoral students, motivations for their degrees in an international context are in relation to less tangible desires such as the development of their professional identities and, as my research will go on to demonstrate, there are further complex motivations for international study that do not easily equate to direct instrumental or material benefits.

[1] Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

1.2 Malaysia: the context

Deep histories, cultures, values and other socio-cultural factors of the different ethnicities have made the Malaysia that we know today. Due to the Malays being the *peneroka* (Malay: early settlers) in Malaya and being the majority of the population, they are arguably the more privileged ethnic group of the land. The country is known as a multi ethnic and multicultural country with a population of 30 million citizens. The main ethnicities that comprise Malaysia are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Additionally, other minor ethnic groups include Punjabis, Gujeratis, and Sindhis. According to the Department of Statistics of Malaysia (2019), the breakdown of the percentages of the current population are Malays (67.3%), Chinese (24.5%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.9%).

The British came to Malaysia, then known as Malaya, in the late 1700s due to expansion of trading between the East and West. As a colonial power they took control of the land in 1867, with the goal specifically to control the Straits of Malacca, which was, at that time, one of the important harbours for trading. During this time, Malaya land, under the British power, flourished in many ways, not only economically but, also, socially. It was during this era that the Chinese and Indians started migrating from their countries to the Malayan soil to fulfil the demand on various economic sectors. While the Chinese settled near the mines, the Indians settled near rubber plantations in order to provide inexpensive labour. Meanwhile, the Malays maintained their occupations as farmers and fishermen, while the Malay elites had a place as civil servants. Such segregation by occupation increased the distance to some extent between the different ethnic groups. Although the British decided to maintain Malay Sultans (Arabic: Muslim sovereign or ruler) as a way to preserve their symbolic status in the social system, this was also a tactic to acquire support and maintain unity amongst the people; however, by the 19th century, the Sultans had lost much of their political power and authority in Malaya.

Lim's (1980) paper discusses the relation between class and ethnicity in Malaysia. During the colonial era and the rise of the world economy, as mentioned earlier, there was segregation in terms of labour force based on ethnic groups. From the colonial period, until today, the Malays have tended to dominate rice production while the Chinese concentrate on mining and the Indians on estates. The labour in mining and plantation estates were supplied by immigrants due to it being economical as it was hard to find local Malays to fill in the demand. Hence, due to this policy, there was little contact between the different ethnic groups which is considered an early form of ethnic segregation in Malaya. Meanwhile in education, vernacular schools for the different ethnic groups were established. These vernacular schools were established to

maintain the social cohesion within each ethnic group of people from other ethnic groups. At these schools, the Malays, Chinese and Indians have learned their ethnic languages and cultures. The British then introduced the English education system to increase the opportunities for the locals in Malaya to work in administration offices (Gill, 2014).

Initially, English education was offered in a small scale to Chinese immigrants in Malaya but, gradually, it was offered to the Malays and Indians who were willing to travel to the schools (which were situated in urban areas). Those who received an English education were then considered to have higher social status. To maintain the social class of the people, the number of English schools remained low. However, Malays who were from the upper social class were given an English education to prepare them for various ruling posts. Moreover, according to Lim (1980), others who received an English education were non-Malays from the middle class. In relation to this dynamic, Bourdieu (1984) also discusses that, in France, those who were from a higher social class had advantages in terms of access to knowledge, for example, which helped to maintain their status quo. Thus, we could see how, at that time, segregation between the ethnic groups transpired due to not only economic purposes but, also, through the education system.

Today, the long history of the Malaya land has resulted in a diverse country, then Malaya, to Malaysia today. After achieving independence in 1957, the citizens became categorized as *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera*. *Bumiputeras* ('sons of the soil'), comprise Malays and other indigenous people from East and West Malaysia. Furthermore, the country's national language is Malay, and the official religion of the nation is Islam.

After Independence, national unity continued to become (arguably until to this day) the country's struggle. Although the Malays comprise the majority in terms of number and in terms of political dominance in the Malaya, economically they were at a disadvantage compared to other ethnic groups (Lim, 1985). In this sense, the term 'minority' could be considered as unconventional and complicated, at least in Malaysia's case, whereby the distinction between class and ethnicity is blurred due to economic and social factors. At the peak of this national plight, an ethnicity-related riot occurred in 1969. Due to socio-economical discrepancies between the ethnicities, a call of intervention in the form of the National Economy Policy (NEP) was implemented whereby the overarching aim of the policy was to achieve national integration through various economic restructuring efforts to eradicate poverty and economic functions based on the different ethnic

groups, as practiced earlier. As mentioned, due to the Malays' concentration in agricultural, Chinese in mining and construction, and Indians in plantations, an economic imbalance exists whereby the income for those in agriculture and plantations were the lowest and mining and construction were much higher. The policy, which was aimed from 1970-1990, was successful in many ways. As a result, the nation has become much more integrated economically and socially due to a concentration of specific ethnic groups in specific economic sectors or businesses.

Meanwhile, in the education and employment spheres for example, *bumiputera* received privileges in terms of access to scholarships, entrance into public HE institutions, as well as employment and positions in the public sector in Malaysia (Lee et al. 2013). Starting in 2001, merit-based entrance to HE institutions was implemented. Although the Malays have historically dominated Malaysia politically, according to Jakobsen (2015), Chinese Malaysians dominate the majority of the country's economic activities. It is recorded that in terms of employment in Malaysia, the *bumiputera* populated the public sector while the *non-bumiputera* are the majority in the private sector. Therefore, as discussed earlier, when comparing before and after independence, in terms of education and employment, Malaysians' education and employment, based on their ethnicities, are in general perceived to be reproduced inter-generationally through long histories of culture, economical background and the ideologies of the various ethnicities.

Similarly, in international education pursuits, the United Kingdom is considered as very highly established and pursued by not only Malaysians but, also, others worldwide. In the Malaysian context, previously, international education in the UK was pursued by students from the higher social class; however, today, opportunities have been made available by the Malaysian government and private agencies through meritocracy to those who demonstrate outstanding academic credibility. Besides the social status gains of a UK education, as mentioned, the graduates are also reported to have economic gains and are desired by employers locally and internationally. Due to the long history between Malaysia (previously Malaya) and the UK, and other factors mentioned, international education in the UK continues to become highly sought-after for its economic and social privileges.

This background information, presented on Malaysia, is vital to paint a picture of the socio-cultural and economic standings of the multicultural country. As illuminated above, class and ethnicity work and are experienced differently in Malaysia due to various influences, which include the factors of historical and national policies.

1.3 Motives for research

As an international PhD student myself, I reflected on my own decision for my sojourn to the UK. I was an English language teacher at my home country at a public university for four years before my sojourn, and I wished to continue my PhD in the UK so that I could experience English language in the target language environment myself. Like many international students, I naïvely assumed that I would naturally fit in with the target language community, in this case the gatekeepers to the language. I imagined myself making friends easily with people around me, just as I was able to do in my home country. Little did I know the nuances of being an international student. Specifically, being in Scotland, during my earlier days in this land, the distinct accent struck me the most. I had never been more conscious of my anxiety when making conversation because I was afraid of not understanding my interlocutors, and thus embarrassing myself or them during social interactions. Furthermore, I have never felt more that I 'stuck out like a sore thumb' in a sea of faces in a foreign land. In this moment, I felt that my identity as a 'foreigner' was amplified. I had not only lost my previous privileges in my home country but, also, my identity as an English language teacher. At times when people asked about my past, my answer surprised them, and I interpreted their raised eyebrows as a silent way of saying dubiously, 'really?'

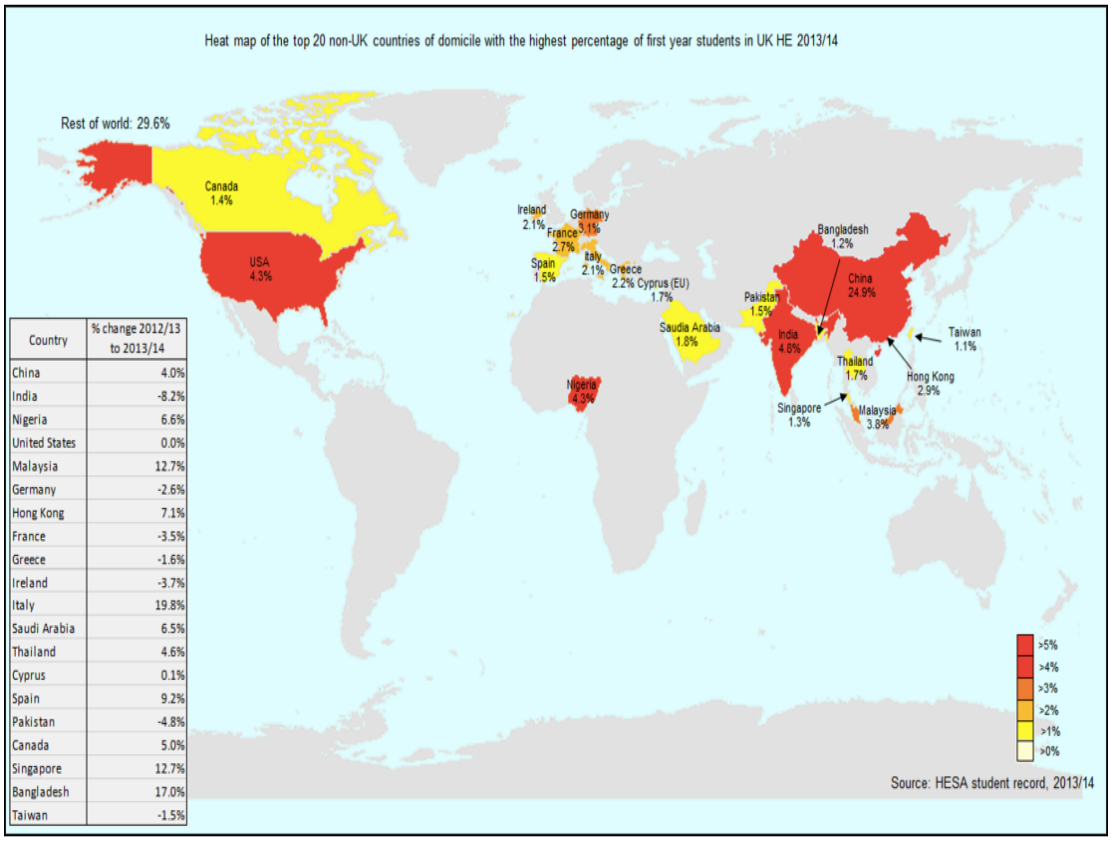
Being away from the comfort of home also meant that I had lost my previous established social network and, as I learnt to know, fostering new relationships was not as easy as I initially envisioned. Gradually, I realised the importance of an individual's prior motivations, their current social interactions, and their perception of their future trajectories, to their investment in their second language learning. Thus, this initially sparked my motivation to pursue my research topic. My initial interest was focused on students' use of language; however, I later found that there are other social and cultural factors involved in such interactions. I was able to see how this related to my own experience. While my friends, especially those from Science fields, talked about their motivation to stay and return, I found myself thinking about my (perceived) loss of advantages and identity (to some extent), as an English language teacher, and how I am not able to do the same, being a second language speaker of the language in the target language environment. The advantages, or 'capital', that I have in my home country, in this sense, is not transferrable and perceived similarly here in the UK.

As sojourners, these inflows of people would be categorised and identities imposed by the host countries such as 'immigrants', 'international students', 'transmigrants' and others. In the university itself there seems to be a label that differentiates the 'international students' from 'home students'. This labelling and identification only

serves to heighten the differences between the two groups in terms of social and cultural factors. According to Reay (2005, 2010), this categorising itself constructs the international student subject as a 'minority'. It was these complex dynamics that I wished to investigate more closely in this current study.

1.4 Rationale

According to data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the top receiving countries of international students are the United States, United Kingdom, France and Australia. The United Kingdom is the second top destination for international students and according to statistics published in July 2014, the country hosts 427,686 students which is almost 20% of the students' population in higher education, and the way international education is progressing; the number is increasing each year. HE institutions thus gain recognition in terms of 'international' status which, in turn, translates to being sought after and in demand; this is shown by the number of students that engage in studying abroad (Hazelkorn, 2011; Bracht et al., 2006).



Country	% change 2012/13 to 2013/14
China	4.0%
India	-8.2%
Nigeria	6.6%
United States	0.0%
Malaysia	12.7%
Germany	-2.6%
Hong Kong	7.1%
France	-3.5%
Greece	-1.6%
Ireland	-3.7%
Italy	19.8%
Saudi Arabia	6.5%
Thailand	4.6%
Cyprus	0.1%
Spain	9.2%
Pakistan	-4.8%
Canada	5.0%
Singapore	12.7%
Bangladesh	17.0%
Taiwan	-1.5%

Figure 1.1 Top 20 non-UK countries of domicile with the highest percentage of first year students in UK HE 2013/14[2]

[2] Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pr184

By looking at the distributions of the non-UK international students in the figure above, we can see the widespread number of students coming from all over the world. Over the years, the literature on International Student Mobility has been especially linked to the field of Migration Studies and international students are regarded as part of the migration flow (Gargano, 2009). These migration flows, which were previously seen as 'unproblematic' and accepted (despite the students' cultural and social differences) and viewed as a group of globally talented people (Findlay, 2011), enter their host countries without much restriction. It was not until the 9/11 event in the US that migration policies globally, especially in the US, took a turn and international students were given more scrutiny through visa restrictions. The event of 9/11 had affected everyone at a global scale, especially international Muslim students all around the world (Asmar, 2005; Mostafa, 2006; King and Raghuram, 2012).

One of the prominent issues addressed in the literature regarding international students is the 'pull and push' factors between the home and host countries, besides the issue of 'brain drain' of skilled students from the home to host countries, and consequent decisions of some students to migrate permanently to the host countries. There are many inter-relational issues between the home and host countries and, therefore, the experiences of the individuals affected should be analysed closely.

In this light, at the recent World Academic Summit of 2015, held in the University of Melbourne, several issues were presented on international student mobility[3]. Over the years, international education has been recognised as one of the main drivers of the economy in many countries and student mobility is dependent on institutional strategic plans. As for the three main reasons of students seeking international education or the pull factors discussed at this summit, graduate outcomes, teaching quality and pastoral care were highly ranked. Graduate outcomes were defined largely in relation to international students' concerns in terms of their employability in their home country, host country, as well as their degrees being recognised in the global workforce. Teaching quality was pursued by these students in terms of the perceived 'prestige' of the institutions and the price of the degrees they seek. Thirdly, pastoral care included the perceived emotional and spiritual support for students that institutions would hopefully provide when they are abroad.

Although a plethora of research has been conducted worldwide in the field on international education in the hope to better support students' educational and social

[3] Times Higher Education (THE). (2015, October 12). World Academic Summit 2015 [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tf5bJPUI30E

experiences and needs, many of these studies are quantitative (Bilecen, 2013; Gargano, 2009). Whilst these are informative in giving the necessary basis for discussing broad trends in international education, more qualitative studies are needed to give deeper insights to the questions of 'what, why and how' that are indicated by the patterns that quantitative research indicates. In particular, knowledge of the lived experience of the sojourners is arguably essential for any deeper understanding of these dynamics.

One of the issues discussed surrounding research studies in international student mobility is the type of mobility being researched and the particular international students involved with the studies. For example, depending on the different sojourners and nationalities, duration of study, purpose of sojourns and the degrees or training they seek, it is difficult to assess and evaluate the impact and experience they have (Bilecen, 2013; Gargano, 2009). International students' mobility will be affected in many ways, both directly and indirectly. In a socio-cultural context, the issue of belongingness of the international students is relevant in some ways with their experience abroad.

Top Ten non-EU sending countries

Country	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
China (PRC)	89,540	87,895	83,790
India	18,320	19,750	22,385
Nigeria	17,920	18,020	17,395
Malaysia	17,060	16,635	15,015
United States of America	16,865	16,485	16,235
Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region)	16,215	14,725	13,065
Saudi Arabia	8,595	9,060	9,440
Singapore	7,295	6,790	6,020
Thailand*	6,240	6,340	6,180
Pakistan	7,295	6,665	7,185

Figure 1.2 Top Ten non-EU sending countries[4]

Focusing on the present study, according to the figure above, from 2014 and 2015 there were 17,060 Malaysian students in the UK and, from the statistics, the number increases each year. In the existing literature, studies on Malaysian students as international students are sometimes lost in the studies, which categorise them as Asian international students. As abundantly present in the literature on international students, Asian

[4] Source: www.ukcisa.org.uk

students primarily consist of Chinese students from China, who in number exceed students from other domiciles including those from the UK. Hence, the issues surrounding Malaysian students (and also those from others countries), as international students are not comprehensively investigated, which I seek to address in this present study.

The study moves the focus from concentrated literature on international students' mobility and experience of the students in East and Central Asia to South East Asia. The different spatial geography not only influences the economic and socio-political experience of individuals as sojourners but, also, these backgrounds could affect their thinking and values. This change of focus is useful to highlight the potential differences of how individuals perceive and experience the accrual of 'advantages' or 'capital' in their time abroad, how these perceptions and experiences are connected to aspects of identity and positioning such as gender and socio-economic background, and the complex ways in which these dynamics affect their transnational lives during their sojourn.

Historically, the majority of Malaysians who have studied abroad were from affluent families. Increasingly, this changed over the years, and international education is now made more accessible to others through the Malaysian government's strategy to improve the quality of the workforce in the country[5].

Specifically, the present study explores micro level experiences of Malaysian doctoral students in the UK. Although experiences in this sense are personal, they are experienced within the particular social and political environment of the host country. Alongside, and simultaneously, international students also maintain contact and are influenced by the social and cultural views of their 'home' country—to a greater or lesser extent, hence, living in 'trans'. Understanding the micro-level everyday life experiences of such students would not only improve our understanding of the issues that international students face but, also, the HE landscapes in the UK under today's increasing global influences.

[5] Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013-2025. Ministry of Education. (2013) Putrajaya: Ministry of Education.

1.5 My research questions

To a greater or lesser extent, it is established that sojourners are motivated by, and tend to experience, numerous forms of 'advantage' from international education. Following this path, the present study explores the motivations for Malaysian students for pursuing doctoral education in the UK, and how these potential or actual gains are viewed and experienced in a transnational context. The transnational lens which is adopted in the study enables the illumination of the complexities of the experiences of these sojourners as student-migrants in the UK. Combining transnational theory with Bourdieu's theorisation of 'capital', the research questions for the present study are as follows:

1) What are the participants' motivations, purposes or aspirations for their sojourn for their PhD degrees?
2) How do the participants perceive their transnational sojourn abroad in relation to their living and learning experiences? What are the challenges that they face and how do they navigate these challenges?
3) How do the participants imagine their future lives upon completion of their doctoral studies? In what ways does their experience of studying abroad affect the lives they envision in the future?

1.6 Significance of the research

As mentioned, international education is established in previous research as a vehicle for quickly gaining forms of social, cultural and economic advantage for students (Brooks and Waters, 2011). The lived experiences of international students from years ago differ enormously with those of today due to the rapid technology advancement that we are fortunate to have today (Rizvi, 2014). On this point, under global influences, we can envisage that individuals experience and make meanings of their transnational spaces differently based on their backgrounds, and with new experiences there may be a shift in terms of identity and habits, perhaps in ways that challenge or run counter to dominant social and cultural 'norms' in their countries of origin. These intricacies are also becoming more complex with the ever-changing landscapes of the global socio-cultural and political environment around the world in these transnational spaces, which affect not only nation-states but, also, movements between and beyond international borders.

Doctoral education in an international context has been studied in various aspects, including studies of student motivations (Coles and Fetcher, 2007; Clark, 2007; Brooks, 2013; Guerin, et al., 2015), lived experiences (Ackers, 2004, 2010; Oliver, 2009; Yeoh and Huang, 2011; Phelps, 2016), academic supervision (Due et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2012; Son and Park, 2014; Soong, et al., 2015; Warner and Miller, 2015), policy and practice, and economic gains, and mobility of graduates (Martin, 2014). Through a transnational lens, the focus on the lived experiences of the doctoral students as in-betweeners would be illuminated. Also, the present study will contribute to the breadth of literature on international education in transnational spaces (Rizvi, 2000; Gargano, 2009), specifically doctoral students' experiences from Malaysia in Scottish HE institutions.

The original contributions of the thesis would be in terms of the research design, theoretical framework, as well as the findings. First of all, in terms of the methodology of the thesis, from recruitment to data presentation, I have kept in mind and employed the technology and its affects to today's sojourners' experiences. Next, the theoretical frameworks used also acknowledge the 'bifocal' realities of sojourners' lives as being 'transnational'. Besides using transnationalism in looking into the sojourners' lives, post-colonialism is also used to acknowledge the emotional sentiments that these individuals have for their receiving country - that they bring from their home country (Boccagni, 2011) - which may affect their daily experiences. Also, the findings of my thesis give some insights into my participants' lived experiences through what is shared in their social media that, at times, may be relevant in today's globalised world.

1.7 My position in the research

As discussed earlier, I was intrigued to investigate the experiences of others doing their PhD from my country—how being abroad may or may not affect their living experiences transnationally, and in what ways. As mentioned, to these PhD students, the majority of who have had respectable and stable positions at their respective employments, leaving what they have had to transitioning to become full-time students must come with a cost—which I experienced myself. According to Gair (2012), researchers' positions in their studies—whether they are insider or outsider would depend on their locations with the group being researched - outside or inside (p. 137). My position in the research is both as an insider and outsider. Being an insider means that I not only shared the same values, language and experiences (to some extent) with my participants (Asselin, 2003), I am also a member of the group being studied (Kanuha, 2000), being a PhD student myself, and as my participants shared their experiences during my interview sessions

with them, I not only found myself relating to these experiences, but also gained more understanding of what it means to do a PhD and being a PhD student in the UK. Being an insider also encouraged my participants, to some extent, to be more open with me due to our common identity as PhD students and, thus, stimulated more in-depth discussions during our interviews. This also means that I would also invest my narrative to encourage my participants to share theirs.

Although our experiences differ due to socio-cultural backgrounds such as age and gender, our similar aim for our doctoral degrees, in some ways enunciate camaraderie as we navigate our transnational experiences in our own personal ways be it for the purpose of career change or career advancement. As a fellow Malaysian who is of Malay ethnicity, a Muslim, single, female in my early thirties, I somewhat have similarities and in other ways differences from the other participants. In terms of similarities, I am a Muslim and similar to the majority of the participants who are funded by the government, pursuing my postgraduate degree—who are also Muslims. Moreover, to different degrees of discrepancies, our English language proficiency and cultural knowledge of the host country may also be similar as, for the majority of the participants and myself, this is our first time staying in the UK for a longer period of time. Also, the majority of the participants, as with myself, would have had some working experiences prior to our sojourn to the UK—thereby suggesting that we would be in the same age range and have similar experiences in the labour market as opposed to others who might be going straight into their postgraduate programmes in their tertiary education routes.

However, on the other hand, I was also an outsider; for example, some differences that we have would be in terms of relationship status where it is perceived to be socially expected as uncommon (but has become more common recently) for a woman of my age not to have married and have children. This reality was proven to be the case when I was asked why I was not married yet by one of my participants during one my interviews. This just goes to show the conventional social constructions and expectations of people from Asian countries, which is much less so in Western countries. These nuances, of course, affect the experiences on macro and micro levels in various aspects as sojourners and especially as PhD students. Thus, this PhD topic has evolved to become a personal journey, not only for my doctoral degree, but also as I find myself in the process.

1.8 Overview of the structure of thesis

As a preview to the thesis, brief information on the content for each chapter is as follow:

Chapter 1

The chapter presents the background of the present study by discussing the motives behind the research as well as the purpose for the study. Next, I will present the research questions that give the research a specific focus.

Chapter 2

Based on the research questions, I designed a possible theoretical framework to answer the questions that I set. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework to address the research questions. To answer the motivations for seeking international education, Bourdieu's theorisation of 'capital' are applied, as well as his conceptions of 'habitus' and 'field'. These tools are useful to analyse the participants' motives for their sojourn. Additionally, to investigate the participants' experiences and their future mobility, the transnational lens is a valuable tool to unpack the issues discussed by the participants regarding the participants' experiences of being in 'transit' and making sense of their experiences and future trajectories between concerns that they have both in the host and home countries. The duality lens that the framework offers would be a complement to Bourdieu's thinking tools especially when it comes to navigating the various habitus and fields.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 discusses the relevant literature surrounding international education. The focus is themed based on the issues pertinent for international education, especially doctoral studies. First, the Chapter discusses the motivations and aspirations for international education under global influences. Second, the previous literature on varied international students' experiences is discussed, including living and learning experiences, as well as concerns surrounding Muslim students as well as student-parents which are pertinent to the present study. As social media is a vital part of how individuals, especially sojourners, maintain social ties in today's world, a discussion on this issue is also presented. Furthermore, the chapter discusses international students' future trajectories as recorded in previous literature.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the research approach that I designed for the study. First, I will be discussing the epistemological and ontological orientations of the research. Based on these orientations, and taking into consideration the theoretical framework I discuss, as well, the review of relevant literature; I decided on a constructionist and interpretivist approach. Next I discuss the methods to collect the data. A naturalistic inquiry through a multi-method qualitative approach was adopted to gather data needed to answer the research questions. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the sampling approach, as well as other factors in methodology such as the ethical concerns surrounding the present study.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 will present the first part of the findings. The question answered in the chapter will be participants' motivations and aspirations for pursuing a PhD, specifically in the UK. As previously recorded in the literature, much of international student's decision to pursue a degree abroad is due to the various forms of advantage they hope to accumulate. Besides these potential benefits, the study illustrates various other factors that are involved, which present a multi-faceted involvement of other significant relationships in the participants' lives as well. This also suggests the complexity of the transnational lives that the sojourners lead during their study abroad.

Chapter 6

The second findings chapter illuminates the lived experiences of the participants during their period of study, through a transnational lens. Specifically, this involves the micro-level experiences, and knowledge gained while sojourning, both in a formal and informal manner. These learnings and experiences show (to a greater or lesser degree) elements of intersectionality. The themes, which are prevalent through the participants' narratives include: language, religion and aspects of 'culture'. These discourses are experienced in a transnational manner, in which the sojourners draw knowledge and resources from both their home and host countries to understand and respond to their day-to-day experiences.

Chapter 7

This chapter discusses another prevalent theme from the data, which is learning experiences and maintaining transnational social ties. In the first part of the chapter, I present the data on the participants' journeys during their doctoral training. Similar to what has been presented in the earlier chapters, I utilise Bourdieu's concept of shifting 'habitus' as a common theme. Furthermore, another important part of the participants'

lives is maintaining their social ties, especially with people back home through social media, specifically Facebook. I explore, here, the ways in which the presentation of their online selves compares and contrasts with their offline presentations of self.

Chapter 8

The final findings chapter presents the participants' imaginings of their future pathways after the completion of their doctoral training. I explore their future mobility aspirations after their sojourn, as well as what they envision for themselves in terms of career pathways. This chapter discusses the complexities of their future aspirations in relation to their perceived transnational responsibilities balancing personal needs, and other relationships in their lives.

Chapter 9

The conclusions to the thesis are presented in this final chapter which, first, answers the research questions that I set out in the Introduction. Second, I discuss the contributions of the thesis to existing knowledge. The main contribution of the thesis is, firstly, highlighting the voices of international doctoral students' experiences from Malaysia in the UK, which are invisible in existing literature of international education. Next, the transnational lens of the present research, which is commonly used in Migration research studies, is applied in the present study to investigate student-migrants' experiences. Also, the present qualitative approach includes online narratives from the participants' social media. The online narratives illuminate the 'in the moment' experiences of the sojourners, which also paint the complexities of the participants' experiences and also their shifting identities, moving beyond merely presenting their 'status updates'. Also, I discuss the implications of the study to various parties such as the international students themselves, the policymakers, the HE institutions in the UK, as well as to the host and home countries (the UK and Malaysia). Finally, I offer a few recommendations that could be applied for future research studies, as well as my reflections on my experiences throughout my journey as a novice researcher.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

When looking at the experience of international students abroad, especially in the UK, much of the existing literature discusses international students as a homogenous group. One of the main contributions of this thesis is in helping to address this gap: although there are expansive research studies conducted on international students, there are sparse research studies that look into a particular social group. Although the advantages gained from international degrees and exposure could be similar, by looking into a particular social group, a more nuanced critical analysis on the students' lived experience can be undertaken. The students' lived experience during their sojourn is greatly affected by their prior experience in their home countries, upbringing, educational opportunities, and other factors that differ from one person to the next. Although it is not possible to assume that international students from Malaysia come with the same background and experience of their home country, it is, however, proposed that they are familiar with the cultural context of Malaysia despite coming from various backgrounds, and this I found was reflected in my conversations with my participants. In order to draw out the similarities and differences in my participants' motivations, perceptions and experiences of their study abroad, I draw on both transnationalism theory and the theory of Bourdieu, particularly in relation to different forms of 'capital' that can be accumulated through international study.

Although initially I intended to look at the linguistic capital that the Malaysian students' gained from their sojourn in relation with their social identities, from my interviews with my participants, and as I reflected on my personal experience, there are other forms of capital that we gain from our personal sojourns in the UK in pursuit of a doctoral degree. In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss Bourdieu's capital theory, and how this helps to analyse the students' lived experiences in the UK. Then, in the second part of the chapter, I will discuss transnational theory and how this also helps in understanding the international student experience in ways that complement Bourdieuian theory.

2.2 Bourdieu's theoretical tools

Bourdieu's theory is a suitable lens in looking into the sojourners' experiences at different spaces and times (for example at the micro level, during the sojourners' university programmes). By focusing on the students who are pursuing their PhD programmes, this provides a more specific focus in looking into the sojourners negotiating their everyday experiences. In the new environment or 'field' (see section 2.2.2 below) of the university abroad, these students can be seen as agents who renegotiate the understandings that they had of the world before their sojourn. With their interactions in the new world of the 'host' university, the students need to learn new academic and social 'rules' of the game. How do the students experience and negotiate this? As the agents or students become more familiar with this new academic world, they begin the process of learning unwritten 'rules' of the game as well (Jackson, 1970; Nowicka, 2015). This could be in the department that they are in, or their country of sojourn in a wider context. As we shall see, this is articulated in the interviews that I had with my participants where, although many of them are funded by the Malaysian Government and were academics in various higher institutions, they reflected on how certain issues were experienced differently in their home country.

2.2.1 Habitus, field, capital

Before we explore the different types of capital, it is important to address the fundamental concepts by Bourdieu, which are habitus, field and capital that I have briefly covered earlier. These concepts will be used throughout the thesis. Firstly, the term 'habitus', coined by Pierre Bourdieu, can be described as a person's traits which include his or her habits or 'lifestyle', values, dispositions and expectations through daily activities within a particular social community. For Bourdieu (1986), power, which is seen as culturally and symbolically created through constant interplay between agency and structure, and 'habitus' which is the practiced behaviour, will affect a person's dispositions of the way they act, think and feel. It is, therefore, formed socially rather than individually. Moreover, according to Bourdieu (1999) and Reay (2004, p. 434), habitus is also a 'complex interplay between past and present' which, through a period of time, could also be shifted under circumstances, as well as individual and collective. Therefore, although according to Bourdieu habitus is linked to a person's history, importantly a person's childhood experience and socialisation with the family, it is however continually reconstructed through experience with the outside world and is therefore not static in nature.

Finally, agency refers to the individuals' ability to make choices in the society, which is seemingly guided by their own free will. However, according to Bourdieu, there is a certain tension between habitus and agency. According to Bourdieu (1990, p. 77), "the habitus as a system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour (…) the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in certain circumstances". However, as previously established, habitus is not static and is constantly being renegotiated by individuals based on their interactions in the field. Next, Bourdieu discusses his concept of 'field' as one of his analytical tools, which presents the platform in which a person portrays and negotiates his or her identity accordingly. The complete definition is:

> In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence, and in the determinations they impose upon occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation… in the structure of the distributions of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (dominations, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

A 'field' is the environment, network or community in which education, cultures and other elements interact. With regard to the present study, these fields during the Malaysian international students' sojourn can be seen as the fields where they provide social spaces for agents in which, according to Bourdieu, access to various forms of capital can happen (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital is the result of labour, according to Bourdieu, and capital would accumulate over time (see 2.2.2). In relation to the present research, the international students' present locations (which not only include the students' institutions, but also the communities that they engage in besides their programmes) can potentially be social spaces or fields where various types of capital can be gained.

Furthermore, the institutional habitus of higher education institutions differs in varying countries. According to Reay et al. (2010), institutional habitus compared to individual habitus are less fluid, albeit they could experience changes due to being collective in nature. This is due to the long history that particular institutional habitus have, which involves long histories and has been established throughout the years alongside other factors such as the practices of the organisations and curriculum as well as less perceptible factors such as the 'cultures' of the institutions. According to Reay et al.

(2010), this is composed of embodied cultural capital (see section 2.2.2 below) in terms of 'the collectivity of students, in their dress, demeanour and attitudes, in particular, their attitudes towards learning and their degree of confidence and entitlement in relation to academic knowledge' (p. 3). This is relevant to any discussion as to the extent to which HE institutions are able and willing to accommodate 'non-traditional' students in the UK, which arguably include international students (Ibid.). Despite efforts from the institutions' part to support the students, be it academically or socially, the students themselves in many cases are suggested to 'go the extra mile' to benefit their international education experience and adapt themselves to UK HE institutions, thus placing the onus on the individual rather than the institution.

2.2.2 Various forms of capital

First of all, although most people consider the term capital to mean 'economic' capital, theorists such as Bourdieu are concerned with the variety of ways in which the resources people can draw on and 'collect' over and above financial or economic capital, for example 'social' 'cultural' and 'symbolic' capital, are often defined differently by other theorists – Bourdieu's definitions are outlined below. Other emerging forms of capital referenced by theorists include 'emotional' capital (Nowotny, 1981; Reay, 2004b). What distinguishes the theory of Bourdieu is his focus on the ways in which more advantaged groups in society can work to reproduce or maintain this advantage through greater accumulation of these forms of capital than less advantaged groups (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The following definitions relate to Bourdieu's conceptions of different forms of capital:

Cultural capital refers to academic degree qualifications, tastes and consumption patterns, for example, material objects such as what we wear, or our taste in art. It could also refer to something less tangible such as 'taste', manners, skills and credentials that individuals are believed to 'possess'. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can be a source of social inequality, as well, in that the degree of possession of cultural capital can be translated into other forms of advantage; for example, possessing certain skills or credentials may lead to a more highly paid career, thus 'cultural' capital can then translate into economic capital. What is the cultural capital that these international doctoral students from Malaysia desire? Next, cultural capital comes in three different forms: the embodied state; objectified state; and, the institutionalised state. First of all, the embodied state refers to forms of knowledge that individuals 'have' or which an individual seeks for her/himself that seemingly lies

within the body/mind of the individual. An example would be the individuals' readily available capital that they acquire from home, for example, literacy knowledge. Next, the objectified state of cultural capital refers to the material objects that can be used to represent an individual's social status to others. An example would be the different types of material products that individuals tend to prefer and consume over others that may carry more 'class' than others. Finally, the institutionalised state refers to a form of capital that can be easily understood at the social level in 'credentialised' form with the sanction of a socially prestigious institution, for example, what types and which level of degrees or other qualifications individuals have. These capitals are also transferable to economic capital when they assist an individual in acquiring a well-paid occupation.

Next, symbolic capital is particularly relevant for looking into the participants' experiences during their sojourn. In Bourdieu's words, "symbolic capital, which is the form of the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate" (1987, pp. 3-4). Symbolic capital is especially useful when looking at issues of power and identity construction in relation to language, and the related concept of linguistic capital. Bourdieu states that language cannot be studied without taking into account the social, historical and political contexts in which it is practiced:

> Bracketing out the social… allows language or any other symbolic object to be treated like an end in itself, contributed considerably to the success of structural linguistics, for it endowed the 'pure' exercises that characterize a purely internal and formal analysis with the charm of a game devoid of consequences. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 34)

According to Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), it is important not to simply focus on the structure of the language, but also in conditions in which language is being used where power and social relations could be demonstrated and investigated. Therefore, Bourdieu (1977, 1991) provides useful conceptual tools in looking into the research under investigation. As reported in previous research studies, one of the major barriers to the acculturation process that international students faced during their sojourn is the 'language barrier' that can lead to feelings of marginalisation and to health issues such as depression (Chen, 1999; Sumer et al., 2008). In relation to this study, Bourdieu's highly acclaimed conceptual tools such as the notions of fields, habitus and power, in relation to language learning and use, are significant and useful to explore the students' language experience in the target language environment. Learning a language is more than simply knowing the structure of the language and

words; there is much more going on that involves language learning and use. In this sense, Bourdieu sees that there is a connection between language and social life. This goes beyond language learning intricacies and classroom dynamics and deals with the socio-political conditions, an individual's status in the community, their social identities in relation to others around them and how they see themselves as language users. In this research, the term 'linguistic habitus', coined by Bourdieu, is used in looking into the students' experiences of using their second language. The term explains the 'sub-set of dispositions' that individuals learn in different contexts, for example, at school, home and other sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, habitus also presents individuals with 'ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being' (Grenfell, 2014). This also takes into consideration individuals' past histories and how they make sense of their world in their everyday lives. According to Bourdieu (1991), when individuals use language, they practice this from their knowledge of language, accommodated with their interlocutors and the social fields in which the interactions take place. The students' new environment sets a new 'linguistic habitus' for them to use and experience the language in their everyday lives.

Much different from the environment that they are used to in Malaysia, the UK provides them with a different canvas where they are confronted with different social actors. As explained further by Bourdieu (1977, 1991) in relation to individuals experiencing a new environment, they enter the new environment with existing dispositions (habitus) and at times this does not match the present environment. This, in the case of L2 speakers[6] in the target language environment, would result in the individual feeling like a 'fish out of water'. Bourdieu's tools would help to look into the interactions between the fields and habitus in relation to the sojourners. Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, therefore, would be essential in looking into international students' experience of language during their sojourn due to his critiques which look at the speakers' position in the social structure. According to Bourdieu (1977), sociological critiques of linguistics are as follows:

> In place of *grammaticalness* it puts the notion of *acceptability*, or, to put it another way, in place of "the" language *(langue),* the notion of the *legitimate* language. In place of *relations of communications* (or symbolic interaction), it puts *relations of symbolic power*, and so replaces the question of the *meaning* of speech with the question of the *value* and *power* of speech. Lastly, in the place of specifically linguistic competence, it puts *symbolic capital*, which is

[6] Second language

> inseparable from the speaker's position in the social structure. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 646)

Thus, to Bourdieu, language is not merely words, it is also the social activity in which individuals engage where the value is different based on fields and the speakers' legitimacy.

Another significant emerging form of capital, emotional capital (Nowotny, 1981; Reay, 2004), is also noteworthy for this study, especially in terms of international students' mobility for education abroad. Diane Reay (2004b) and Helga Nowotny (1981) have introduced and developed the concept of emotional capital from Bourdieu's existing concepts of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic). In addition, according to Reay [7], emotional capital can be accumulated through social relationships and distributed amongst family members. Compared to other capital, emotional capital portrays a particularly gendered capital in which women are often perceived to have more emotional capital than men, and it is performed more often in private (a sphere implicitly gendered as 'feminine') than publically (Nowotny, 1981). In a study conducted by Reay (2004b), she explored mothers' involvement in their children's schooling experience. Her findings showed that mothers are very involved in their children's performance in schools and were emotionally affected by their achievement. Her research also showed that this observation did not differ according to people from different class. This shows that for example in this case, schooling, despite different class backgrounds, parents' gender affects the investment of emotions in educational attainment.

Finally, another vital form of capital relevant to sojourners would be faith capital. According to previous research (Abdullah, 2011), faith can be important as a source of support for individuals living away from their previous social networks. Faith capital is thus argued to be a socially based capital, which is linked to the importance of community. The involvement with these communities through faith-based activities and events, not only benefits the individuals in terms of their understanding in their faith but also the relationships between the individuals who are involved.

Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical tools, which include capital, habitus and field, are vital in the present study. Capital, for instance, would illuminate the purposes for international doctoral students from Malaysia to pursue their training in HEIs in the UK. Meanwhile, habitus, field and agency are useful lenses to investigate the participants' lived

[7] Ibid.

experiences in the UK, while also taking into account their past experiences. The transnationalism lens would also be incorporated in the study to complement that of Bourdieu.

2.3 Transnationalism - 'Being *here* and *there*' - and contemporary migration

In today's highly interconnected world, in a context of rising communication technology and virtual 'social media', sometimes the sense of space, place and even time can be blurred. For example, a family in Malaysia celebrating their father's birthday could easily FaceTime their daughter, Mariam who is studying abroad in the UK, which makes the celebration almost real, having all their members together, despite the family and their daughter being separated by 10,588 km in distance, and operating in different time zones - but in that moment, they are together. The anecdote illustrates the reality of the "network society" as popularised by Manuel Castells (1996), where today's globalised world is linked almost simultaneously. With this, "the barriers such as distance gradually diminish as communities become able to substitute traditional personal contact with new electronic means of communication" (Portes et al., 1999). Hence, following Mariam in the anecdote earlier, what does it mean for her to be abroad and how does she experience her daily life while still maintaining her social ties with her family back home? What does it mean to be elsewhere and away from home? Blunt and Varley (2004, p. 3) capture this complexity in discussing the ways in which the notion of 'home' is linked to particular 'geographies' of space and time:

> Geographies of homes are both material and symbolic and are located on thresholds between memory, nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears (…) rather than view the home as a fixed, bounded and confining location, geographies of home traverse scales from the domestic to the global in both material and symbolic ways.

Transnationalism is a concept that helps explain this social phenomenon. *Trans*[8], which is a prefix, which means 'across', 'beyond', 'on the other side of' or 'through'; meanwhile 'national' as an adjective means 'relating to or characteristic of a nation; common to a whole nation' and as a noun means 'a citizen of a particular country'. Transnationalism, which is heightened connectivity between people surpassing nation-state boundaries, carries not only social-cultural elements, but also economic and political elements, and was first coined in 1921, by the writer Randolph Bourne as 'a new way to thinking relationships between cultures'.

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[8] Source: https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/

In looking into the lived experiences of the graduate students in the study, transnationalism serves as a fascinating lens to analyse the participants' experiences in the UK. Previously, transnationalism has been widely used in migration and urban studies and, in recent years, has been gaining popularity and adopted in the field of international education. Therefore, in the present research study, I borrow Steven Vertovec's (2001) notion of transnationalism, which can be defined as any global connections and cross border activities, which often involve sojourners. According to Vertovec (1999, p. 5), transnationalism can be defined as "being here and being there at the same time", which captures the essence of being international students in today's contemporary world. In Steven Vertovec's words (2009, p. 3), transnationalism is:

> (…) a condition in which, despite great distances, and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kind of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common - however virtual – arena of activity.

According to Vertovec there is a complementarity between transnationalism and Bourdieu's theory, including the concept of habitus. Despite international borders, there is an interconnection and a sense of 'bifocal' habitus (1977, 1990) in ways the sojourners live their daily experiences. According to Vertovec (2009, p. 67), the duality of habitus emerges from their constant comparison of experiences between their home country and host country during their sojourn. Through a transnational lens, the participants also draw on various cultural and other resources from both home and host countries, which would benefit them (Levitt, 2011). Also, according to Vertovec (2001), transnational connections can affect individuals and their families in a variety of aspects which include their ethnic, religious or other affiliations in two or more localities in terms of not only political, but also economic, and socio-cultural aspects.

Ethnic, migration and urban studies are the fields which first employed transnationalism as a lens to study the lives of migrants in various spaces and places. Previous literature includes the lived experiences of trans-migrants and diasporic communities, for example, Haitian immigrants in New York (Fouron and Schiller, 2001), Puerto Rican women's development and maintenance of transnational communities in the United States (Alicea, 1997) and many others. However, Gargano (2009) states that although there have been numerous studies on cross-border travellers, especially in relation to

the mobility of the international student, empirical research which presents the 'voices' of the international students is limited. Ultimately, I would like to explore the dynamics of crossing borders from the point of view of the students themselves, and in the thesis I explore the variety of motivations and experiences of crossing borders that affect the individuals involved in different, complex ways.

Historically, literature on migration has tended to focus on migrants who are economically disadvantaged, or involved in political conflicts in their home countries and, thus, seek better opportunities for themselves and their families in their host countries. However, in recent years a 'new rise of migration' has involved migrants of the highly skilled, who sojourn in the host country for a variety of purposes that may differ from the former groups. According to Portes et al. (1999), "immigrant communities with greater average economic resources and human capital (education and professional skills) should register higher levels of transnationalism because of their superior access to the infrastructure (technological innovations) that makes these activities possible" (p. 224).

International students probably form one of the largest groups for border crossing. However, literature on transnational migration, most of the time, does not establish the status of the migrants as students nor does it focus on their particular views or experiences (Gargano, 2009). Although international students are only one of the subsets of the larger category of transnational migration, understanding their mobility and their nature of reproductive ties which are socially embedded in their personal networks which include family and friends in both home and host countries are vital areas to study.

Furthermore, Gargano (2009) further explains the possibility of using the transnational social field to explore how international students make sense of the world around them in their pursuit of a degree. Hence, this provides a useful lens to look into the life worlds of Malaysian students as international doctoral students. Similarly, Fazal Rizvi's (2005) study on international doctoral students' experiences in Australia also employed a transnational lens. The study illustrates how international doctoral students from developing countries experience their doctoral training in a Western HEI, the challenges that they have as researchers, how they negotiate these experiences as global researchers and, at the same time, remain connected to their home countries.

According to researchers (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Portes et al, 1999; Gargano, 2009; Boccagni, 2011), in using transnationalism as a lens, it is important that researchers

distinguished several preconditions in their research studies, if they wish to employ it. For Glick Schiller and colleagues (1992, p. 5), they suggest six preconditions, which include: 1) identifying the ethnic group, nation or society, 2) the transnationalism should be linked to global processes, 3) rooting the transnationalism in the sojourners' lived experiences and their social ties, 4) analyse the complexities of their identities (eg., ethnicity, nationality, etc.), 5) reconceptualisation of categories of ethnicity, nationality to further renegotiate class, culture and society, and 6) (re) negotiation of dominant cultures (global or national) through the sojourners' lived experiences. Next, Portes et al. (1999) stresses the importance of determining the occupations or activities that the sojourners are involved in. He further asserts that modern day technology is, in itself, a condition for transnationalism.

Meanwhile, Boccagni (2011) argues that transnationalism should be focusing on three particular aspects to further strengthen the transnational lens. First, he stresses a stronger association to globalisation studies. When it comes to everyday social reproduction, global processes impact could be essential in studying not only the migrants in question, but also non-migrants as well in a broader context. Second, Boccagni (2011) also questioned 'what is waiting at the homeland?'. In this sense, what are the connections that the sojourners have in terms of 1) interpersonal social ties, 2) the sojourners' connections with the organisations in their home, and 3) the sojourners' social and emotional ties in their home that they might reproduce in their host country. Third, the issues of the sojourners' identities and sense of belonging — and the extent of assimilation or integration they have with the home and host countries. These preconditions are useful in giving directions to the present study.

2.3.1 Transnational Spaces

The concept of space has always intrigued geographers. In the modern world, technology has further accelerated how we conceptualise the spaces we occupy, and how capital travels. Harvey's (1989) 'time-space compression' captures how globalisation through economic activities affects the way we experience time and space. With the acceleration of economic activities, Harvey argues that capital travels at an increasing speed, especially with technology advancement. However, according to Massey (1993), our experience of space is not determined by capitalism and its progress alone as suggested by Harvey, but also other factors, which include social class, ethnicity and gender, among others. Massey (1993, p. 66) argues that although people exist in the same place, what they experience may differ from one another, "people's routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make

(physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously". She (Massey, 1993, p. 67) further claims, "what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalised history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus." Hence, to Massey a sense of place is no longer bounded by boundaries but "includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way to the global and the local" (p. 67).

Appadurai (1996, p. 33) in *'Modernity at Large'*, coined the terms 'ethnoscape', technoscape', 'financesape', 'mediascape' and 'ideoscape'. These various landscapes suggest the spaces navigated by individuals in which they are unbounded globally. In looking into the transnational experiences of sojourners who sojourn for various purposes (they could be categorised as immigrants, refugees, tourists and others, and in the present study, international students), Appadurai (1996, p. 33) termed the landscape of individuals "who constitute the shifting world" as the 'ethnoscape'. 'Technoscape', meanwhile, refers to the technology advancement, which serves as a transport for 'financescape', 'mediascape', and 'ideoscape'. This echoes Manuel Castells's notion of 'network society' where information, images and imaginations in today's globalised world travel fast and without boundaries.

Therefore, in these transnational spaces, which exist in this study between the students' home and host countries, they are constantly negotiating and balancing everyday situations, in consideration of the past, present and future aspirations and expectations, be it personal and social. In these spaces, through the participants' narratives, this study sheds light on their experiences. What is articulated by Massey and Appadurai, here, arguably align with Bourdieu's notion of social fields as discussed earlier. The transnational spaces represent the spaces in which affiliations such as cross-border relationships, economic, political and cultural relations of the societies today are interconnected globally with one another.

2.3.2 Transnational lives and identities

One of the prominent aspects of research into individuals who experience crossing borders would be research on the effects of such journeying on their identities. To which people or cultures do they more relate - their 'home' country or the 'host' country - will it become a 'hybridised' mixture of identification, or even would there exist a 'third space'? According to Vertovec (2001, p. 578), the experiences that individuals have living in social worlds where it is unbounded, but in 'habitats of

meaning' according to Ulf Hannerz (2000), through the interactions of individuals' cultural backgrounds would, in turn, construct their identities or even multiple identities. Therefore, it suggested that identity as non-static and constantly being negotiated through everyday lived experiences, would be due to the interactions that the sojourners have both with their home and host countries in socio-cultural, political and economic realms. These various contexts have been termed the 'transnational social field' (Glick Schiller et al., 1992), where according to Vertovec (2001, p. 578):

> (…) the multi-local life-world presents a wider, even more complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and reproduction of social identities. These identities play out and position individuals in the course of their everyday lives within and across each of their places of attachment or perceived belonging. Transnational(ised) identities may also, indeed, form the basis of homeland or receiving country-focused political engagement.

These established multiple identities are, according to Massey (1993), relations to places; which can both provide 'richness or conflicts' to the individuals. What Massey suggests, here in turn, would be what Bhabha (1991) and Bolatigici (2004) describe as the 'third space' in which identities could emerge. This hybrid third space is where there is no 'primordial unity or fixity' (Bhabha, 1994) in terms of cultural meaning and representation.

2.3.2.1 Transnational Social Networks

One of the ways of investigating personal networks is by using a 'clustered graph' to look into the social relations of the sojourners with people in the home country and host country. The term "embeddedness" is used to see how a person acts and reacts, influenced by the context in which he or she functions in the social world. "Embeddedness" is a concept proposed by Karl Polanyi in his work in economy and later this approach was further explored by Granovetter (1985) to look into the relationship between social network structures and economic network structures. Since then, a range of fields have used the concept. In relation to this study, the social ties that participants form, both home and abroad, which could affect an individual's transnational experiences.

According to the Clustered Graph[9] methodology, an individual's transnational personal networks can be assessed through the interconnectedness of the relation between the "nationals", "co-ethnics" and "other people in any country". This captures the experience of individuals with their personal networks in which they engage with people of various walks of life and is worthwhile to be explored in the education field in relation to transnational fields. This helps to visualise the 'power-geometry' as proposed by Massey (1993) where individuals form social ties at various levels, be it locally and globally across borders, and in these various areas of embeddedness in the social networks, suggest the degree of power that they have with others around them. This is relevant especially when looking into the transnational social ties and the social capital gains of the sojourners which, in some ways, can influence their identity constructions.

In this juncture, one of the important observations of being in *trans* is an individual's *'ways of being'* and his or her *'ways of belonging'*. According to Levitt and Schiller (2004), there are distinctions between the two. The former, *'ways of being'* would be the practices and the social relationships that an individual has rather than the identities linked to their actions. These social fields such as institutions, organisations, and experiences, are linked to certain identities connected to the people or groups, albeit they do not choose to be within the social field. In contrast, 'ways of belonging' means the identity, which shows connection to a particular group. These are conscious actions rather than symbolic that propose connections with the groups an individual wishes to associate themselves with (Levitt and Schiller, 2004).

To illustrate this, Levitt and Schiller (2004) further exemplify that a person could combine both depending on context. For example, a person may act or dress as how he or she is brought up but this does not suggest his or her ways of belonging, but simply ways of being. Instead, if a person does not have any relationships with a particular group but demonstrates actions associated with the particular group, this shows that he or she is establishing ways of belonging. To illustrate this, a sojourner for example may establish her link to her religious affiliation by wearing a hijab to present herself as a Muslim and this portrays her ways of belonging abroad. These examples, in some ways show that these individuals are exhibiting relationships in their transnational ways of belonging through memories or imaginations (Levitt and Schiller, 2004).

However, negotiating ways of being and ways of belonging are never easy as individuals are often conflicted with their previous habitus, while experiencing their present and

[9] see Budescu and Budescu (2012)

perhaps what they envision in the future, consciously or unconsciously. This conflicting state of being can be described as 'bifocality' (Vertovec, 2004) where the individuals are faced with *local ways of being* versus embracing their *transnational ways of belonging*. In conceptualising the social relations, which connect Malaysian students with their home and host countries, through various modes of communications, and especially with the advent of new technology, specifically the internet and social media, it is possible that a few may be more 'connected' with their home country than others and vice versa.

In Appadurai's (1996) *Modernity at large,* he describes the electronic media such as television, computers and other technological devices as resources for the imaginary self. For example, according to Levitt and Schiller (2004), there is a chance that those who maintain high levels of homeland contact are much more influenced by these forms of information, resources and identities. Literature in the study of migration has established the connection between migration and social media (Stewart, 2010; Martin and Rizvi, 2014). Sojourners often use their social media as a way to document their experiences with their family and friends, besides maintaining social ties. This is relevant to the present day in which the social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other online platforms are a part of everyone's daily lives especially as a way to keep in touch during their sojourn (Saw et al., 2013). According to Goffman (1959), there are certain common techniques that individuals use to maintain certain impressions that the individuals want to portray to the world. For example, features such as 'status updates' that students share can be seen as first person narratives (Georgakopolou, 2017) and these narratives are used to share what they are feeling and also to promote conversations amongst their 'friends' on Facebook. However, on these platforms, sometimes individuals do not portray their 'objective' true self but, instead, a particular presentation (Goffman, 1959). Among other purposes, social media serves as a channel for self-expression, to share religious and political views among others. Rightly so, for these reasons, Vertovec (2004) termed this as 'the social glue of transnationalism'. Thus, this illustrates Castells's 'network society' and Appadurai's 'mediascape' in terms of the acceleration of communication and imaginary of today's globalised social worlds.

Next, in looking into contemporary lives of sojourners or migrants, transnationalism also presents a more 'modern' take on the social phenomenon. Transnationalism challenges the conventional assimilation perspectives which tended to focus on the extent to which migrants are fully integrated into the host society and, subsequently, do not continue to be involved with their home country economically, socially and politically.

Host countries have previously been described as a ‘melting pot’ of cultures, but later it has been suggested that a ‘salad bowl’ may be a better metaphor for cultural mix (Cohen et al., 2013). According to Cohen et al. (2013), earlier migration concepts suggests the migrants eventually melting into their host cultures; however, the ‘salad bowl’ concept suggests migrants not only adapt aspects of their host countries’ cultures, but also maintain their ‘roots’ by continuing to be influenced by aspects of their ‘home’ cultures.

Due to international students’ position as being in ‘trans’, of being ‘here’ and ‘there’ simultaneously, the transnational lens could capture international students’ experiences. In living in trans, those who are involved are exposed to dual cultural influences of their home and country of sojourn - in this sense, transnationalism enables us to see where individuals changed or remained, and in what aspects and contexts such changes happen. In future pathways, for example for my participants, where they will eventually return upon the completion of their degrees, this perspective is highly relevant to the present research study. As I will discuss, the participants’ imaginations of where they would be and how they would be changed in the future were articulated; however, it is beyond this research study’s scope to investigate the participants’ experience in navigating their lives upon their return. This highlights Levitt’s (2011) notion that transnational lives are influenced by the home and host countries in different ways at different stages in their lives. Furthermore, transnational experience then according to Levitt (2011) is not an irreversible process, which she describes as a dynamic instead of linear process. Individuals, therefore, are constantly negotiating between both borders (home and host countries) for relevant cultural and other types of resources that benefit them.

Besides the impact that transnational experiences have on the sojourners’ lives and identities, Levitt (1998) coins the term ‘social remittances’ in which, besides the transfer of funds to home countries, migrants also transfer other intangible forms of objects such as ideas, cultures, values and practices. The role that these resources play in promoting immigrant entrepreneurship, community and family formation, and political integration is widely acknowledged. She also discusses the ways that the individuals involved in transnationalism informed and affected their home country in terms of its social and political atmosphere. According to Martin (2014) the experiences of these transnational individuals could affect gender and family generational values.

In this sense, the habitus of the sojourners depends on the degree of their integration in the host society and, as explained, transnationalism also argues against the more traditional view of the process of integration and assimilation of sojourners in the receiving countries. For example, to better integrate into the host country, the sojourners do not necessarily have to assimilate completely into the cultures of the host country. Transnationalism, therefore, acknowledges that to better integrate in the host society in the receiving countries, it is important for the sojourners to simultaneously maintain the cultures and practices of their sending countries (home countries) whilst they are in their host countries, and the social remittances from host to home countries and vice versa are, to some extent, bounded by agency, as proposed by Bourdieu.

2.3.2.2 Transnationalism and Intersectionality

Intersectionality is developed as a response to 'feminist of colour' regarding issues concerning gender (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990). Intersectionality, as emphasised in Euro-America an important lens to be developed in the last few decades to help to us to examine the influence of gender, but also age, religion, nationality, sexuality and other social constructs. These stresses are similarly applied in transnational feminism, with further emphasis on the influence of nation-states (Purkayastha, 2010). These social constructs are not static, and they are dependent on time and location and, thus, help to illuminate the sojourners' transnational lives to better understand the experiences of minority groups in their host countries. In relation to the present study, intersectionality will help to comprehend the everyday micro-level experiences of international students in living and learning, and maintaining social ties with family and friends during their time abroad in transnational spaces.

In understanding Malaysian students in the UK in the contemporary globalised era, specifically, due to the historical backgrounds between Malaysia and the UK, through a post-colonialism lens, it also could offer insights into the complexities between the participants' experiences in the transnational spaces (between their home and host countries). In Edward Said's (1979) publication, *Orientalism*, he argued that the West views the other as 'exotic' and different, which also suggests dominance over 'the orient'. Post-colonial theory is important in looking into the influence of the West and its capability to extend their dominance not only in their countries, but also beyond its geographical borders (John, 1996). Perhaps the most influenced aspect of colonialism in the post-colonial context of the British in Malaysia is education. In education in particular, post-colonial studies discuss the influence of the West in producing educational knowledge by the Western intellectuals, and the inclusiveness of other

intellectual thinking by people from other backgrounds and countries (Subedi and Daza, 2008). Furthermore, as argued by Asher (2005, p. 1080), for the purpose of "decolonization and social transformations, postcolonialism also helps to deconstruct the external dominance of the colonisers, as well as one's own internalization of and participation at the same time". Similar to Asher's experience as a post-colonial border-crosser, the post-colonial lens would help to unpack the narratives of Malaysian students in the UK.

2.3.3 Transnationalism and higher education institutions

It is important to define the locality of the experience, and as established, as there is a distinct practice between the experience of HE students in different parts of the UK, in terms of their education, language and other experiences that may be affected by educational policies and teaching and learning practices. This not only brings changes to the sojourners' worldviews but, also, their habitus in experiencing their transnational lives. In relation to the study, 'the journey of becoming doctor' is, itself, an identity transition (Barnacle and Mewburn, 2010 p. 433).

In relation to international doctoral students from Malaysia, their purposes for PhD degrees, as would be discussed in the finding chapters varies from one person to the next. Alongside this, their purposes also encompass various types of capital accumulation trough their sojourn in the UK. According to Harvey (1993, p. 7), "investment in consumption spectacles, the selling images of places, competition over the definition of cultural and symbolic capital, the revival of vernacular traditions associated with places, all become conflated in interplace competition". Therefore, in relation to the study, this articulates the international students' consumption of Western HEIs. As established earlier, HEI institutions on their own are spaces where the individuals inhabit, and they live and learn in these spaces and elsewhere, while maintaining elements of their homeland, alongside those of their host country.

2.4 Amalgamating the Theories

Transnationalism in the present study, thus, would throw light on to the everyday micro level life experiences of international students living in the UK. The advantage of using the theory is that it acknowledges the values of both experiences in both the host and home countries. The value, here, emphasises that it is not necessary for international students to assimilate fully with the host country cultures, but recognises the reality of sojourners' struggles in 'balancing' the social, economic, religion and other aspects of individuals' lives that are constantly being renegotiated between the host and home countries.

On this note, the second theory I applied, Bourdieuian theory, complements the transnational focus on the constant renegotiation of aspects of individual identity in relation to home and host countries. This theory allows us to understand more closely how this negotiation takes place. According to Bourdieu, a person's 'habitus' is constantly being renegotiated and it takes into account individuals' past, present and future experiences. The habitus is then constantly changing and growing and not static in nature and, thus, malleable to individuals' everyday life experiences. Furthermore, by drawing on Bourdieu's ideas, pursuing doctoral degrees abroad means that the participants would be required to draw upon cultural, social and economic elements besides the various forms of capital that they wish to acquire during their sojourn. As Bourdieu argued, individuals' habitus is highly informed by their personal backgrounds, especially due to family and past educational influences and, thus, this would mean the evolving nature of individuals' habitus. Also the match between the participants' past and present habitus would help them when operating in the 'field' and playing to 'the rules of the game'.

Alongside this, when discussing international students' decisions to study abroad, individuals' acquisition for the different forms of capital, as previously discussed (see section 2.2.2), are unique to each sojourner. For example, in terms of motivations for pursuing a PhD, individuals' reasoning and aspirations are distinct (to an extent) from one another and, thus, inform their experiences and, perhaps, future trajectories. These issues are highly individualised and subjective and, to some extent, especially in terms of motivations for doing a PhD abroad, the third theory, post-colonialism, is an important theory especially when it is related to the participants' history that would be beneficial in understanding their dispositions of foreign capital acquisition and experiences in the host country.

Post-colonial theory acknowledges influences between the sojourner and host country by recognising the existence of intersecting inequalities - whereby the dominance could not only transpire in one's country, but crossing geographical boundaries (John, 1996). What sojourners experience is not only in terms of physical bodies in that sense, but also travelling and being carried subconsciously by the minds. This complements Bourdieu's habitus as the experiences—the bodies and the minds—are what challenges and stirs the habitus for constant renegotiations of the past, present and future. Furthermore, post-colonialism ties with transnationalism as discussed earlier as they both acknowledge the importance of the home country's influence over sojourners in pursuit of foreign capital and, as the British is an influential part of Malaysian history - socially and economically - the analysis on intersecting equity and inequalities would be useful.

According to Bhabha (1994) there should be no binary between the colonised and the colonisers and, hence, identity should not be prescribed as it should be seen as a hybrid, where it is continuously being contested and challenged when in contact with others from different values, cultures and backgrounds. Hence, this ties in with what is proposed earlier by Bourdieu's habitus lens, where it is in continuous flux, and transnational – by taking into account the effects of social, political, cultural and economic influences of the sojourners in both the home and host countries (see section 2.4.2). Bhabha (1994) also further asserts that in terms of identity, individuals' performativity is highly situational and 'hybrid' in nature; it could be hostile and/or associative to the 'other'. Similarly, transnationalism theory discusses the disjuncture between what could be considered as the sojourners' transnational ways of belonging versus ways of being (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Thus, with regard to the various elements discussed, analysis through the post-colonial lens is essential to deepen our understanding to the present study.

Finally, the fourth building block to the present study's framework is intersectionality. As the present study acknowledges the important element which is the binary (or lack of) between the host and home countries, intersectionality provides the important distinctive factors that influence individuals' experiences due to their social positioning, such as gender, age, religion, nationality other social factors. These analyses would help to cast light onto the sojourners' experiences, and especially inform the unique post-colonial attachment (resilience or resistance) to the 'exotic other' (as suggested by postcolonial scholars).

In summary, the theoretical frameworks presented - Bourdieu, transnationalism, post-colonialism and intersectionality - provide a comprehensive lens (to some extent) to the sojourners' micro level everyday life experiences of Malaysian doctoral students in the UK. My study, therefore, to the best of my knowledge would potentially add to the breadth of knowledge, especially to future studies similar to mine which focuses on participants from postcolonial countries. What motivates individuals' mobility (or hinders mobility) perhaps for the accumulation (or lack thereof) of the different forms of capital could be further investigated and the present framework would also acknowledge the individuals' experiences, which encompass the individuals' past, present and future experiences and life trajectories.

2.5 Conclusion to the Chapter

By drawing on the theories from Bourdieu's (1986, 1992) capital, social fields and habitus, as well as transnationalism, these inform the present study in the lived experiences of international doctoral students from Malaysia in the UK. In today's globalised world, which is highly mobilised and interconnected (Castells, 1996), the sojourners' transnational experiences are influenced by the socio-cultural, political and economic spheres of both their home and host country simultaneously (Vertovec, 2009). Multiple identities or the 'third space' (Bhabha, 1991) that sojourners experience may derive from the conflicting factors from various directions through their transnational experiences. Influences on the sojourners through experiences in the social fields or spaces that they occupy in their HEIs and beyond, not only affect their multiple identities but, also, their negotiations of habitus in the past, present and future.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights several issues surrounding international students' mobility and experience. As previously discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, it is important to identify the type of mobility as this would affect not only the sojourners' experiences in the host country, but also their motivations and also future trajectories (Vertovec, 2009; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Portes et al, 1999; Gargano, 2009; Boccagni, 2011). The experiences of international students can differ from other types of mobility such as economic migrants or refugees, which are constrained by particular political, religious and economic challenges (Rizvi, 2000). International student mobility, which is often temporary, also suggests that the sojourners lived experiences happen simultaneously—both at home and abroad. However, despite international students arguably being the largest group of migrants, there is comparatively little qualitative literature concerning the group that focuses on their particular perceptions and experiences (Findlay, 2011). It is also important to note that, to date, in the field, there are more research studies on undergraduate than postgraduate international students.

Keeping in mind the theoretical framework established in the previous chapter, I will discuss the relevant literature surrounding international students, especially those who are pursuing education in Anglo-Western universities. The literature review is also going to be presented based on the themes from the present empirical findings. First of all, I will discuss the literature on the international students' motivations and aspirations for sojourn. Secondly, I will discuss the experiences of international students, which will touch on issues surrounding identities, their challenges and reported coping strategies. Finally, I will discuss the participants' future pathways upon finishing their studies in the country of sojourn: the issues on returning to the home country, staying in the host country or elsewhere. The literature reviewed in the chapter is derived from various disciplines, which include, prominently, international and higher education, as well as the fields of sociology and anthropology. With the review of the relevant literature, it is hoped that it will present some context to build knowledge surrounding the empirical findings that will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

3.2 Motivations, purposes and aspirations

International students' motivations to study abroad often relate to benefits to sojourn in terms of educational resources and courses, language proficiency as well as cultural exposure[10]. In the increasingly globalised field of HE, international student mobility could also be seen as increasing the opportunities in transnational labour markets (Rizvi, 2009). Other benefits include becoming cosmopolitan through their exposure to other cultures, which benefit the sojourners in the labour markets (Rizvi, 2010; Sin, 2013; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015).

3.2.1 Capital accumulation

The existing literature reviews that explore international students' motivations for study abroad report that by pursuing 'Western' education, sojourners are able to gain social and cultural capital (Brooks and Waters, 2011). Besides that, study abroad could also benefit them in national and global labour markets due to the symbolic 'world class' international education received (Findlay, et al., 2012). Amsler and Bolsmann (2012, p. 284) further assert that 'world-classness' and university rankings are deeply historical. The majority of these studies also follow the experiences of international students who are from developing Asian countries to developed 'Anglo-Western' countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and Canada, as well as EU countries (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

According to Kim (2011), in a qualitative study conducted on Korean graduate students in the US, the reasons for their sojourn are due to a desire to increase their socio-economic status and job market value, to avoid perceived injustices in the system and culture of their home country, to gain knowledge from the symbolically global education hub, as well as to become more 'cosmopolitan' through their English language skills and international connections.

Next, previous literature discusses how study abroad benefits the student in terms of the accumulation of cultural capital. Exposure with home students as well as other international students, arguably, helps to increase individuals' cultural awareness. Besides gaining a sense of cosmopolitanism, which benefits interactions with others from different cultures, this is also perceived to be an invaluable quality in the labour market. Besides that, as suggested by Rizvi (2000), international education itself could affect their sense of identity (this will be discussed in section 3.4).

[10] Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) (2013)

Furthermore, other studies discuss the transformative advantages of study abroad to sojourners. For example, according to Rizvi (2000), besides capital gains, international education is considered as a transformative experience for sojourners, that enables the sojourners to be more comfortable in more than one cultural space, and view the world as being 'dynamic and multicultural'. Rizvi (2000) also argues that through international education, sojourners would be exposed to the 'global imagination' that links to their sense of identity. Instead of previously having an understanding of their identity in nation-state spaces, international education is arguably able to provide an extension to this imagination. For example, Rizvi (2000) discussed about the experiences of a few of the participants in his study in relating to other diasporic communities beyond their nations. Through exposure to international education, they are able to reflect themselves in their relations to others from different countries who share the same religion or ethnicity[11].

Research studies also demonstrate that parents can act as important institutions for international student mobility in which, for middle class parents, supporting their children's international education is arguably akin to investing in bitcoin. Besides benefiting the students, the families also gain advantage from the sojourn. Through a transnationalism lens, pursuing education abroad is also a strategy to increase social, cultural and symbolic capital of the transnational family (Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005). In Waters's (2006) study, for example, families in Hong Kong strategically pursue their children's education in Canada as a way to avoid the competitive HEI entrance examinations in their home country. This is considered as a strategy for a 'second-chance' into the programmes of their choice.

In contrast, while the majority of the previous literature above investigated students from the 'East' who pursue education in the 'West', Brooks and Waters' (2010) qualitative study explored young adults from the UK motivations for international education outside the UK. The study found that 'mobility capital' is socially-embedded and influenced by these individuals' social networks such as parents, friends and partners (Brooks and Waters, 2010). The study also highlighted Bourdieu's notion of reproduction of habitus in the individuals' view of travel and international mobility. Since the participants of the study do not necessarily pursue international education for accumulations of capital, which was previously mentioned in other studies, it highlighted other aspects for these economically 'comfortable' individuals who were motivated to pursue education abroad. This marked not only the differences in terms of the role of international education on the reproduction of middle class status, but also

[11] Ibid.

the influence of economic, socio-cultural, as well as political spheres of the transnational spaces of the sending and receiving countries, and how these aspects would benefit international students according to their individual motivations and purposes.

Research studies that discuss motivations for international education generally highlight the individuals' aspiration for capital accumulation, especially for individuals seeking undergraduate degrees. However, according to research studies on postgraduate studies, these studies' participants' discourses suggest further complex reasoning and aspirations. For example, motivations for research students in HE may involve other benefits that are related to their professional identities (Rizvi, 2010).

As discussed, while early studies have focused on capital accumulation through international mobility through education, more recent studies on international education (Rizvi, 2010; Sin, 2013; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015) demonstrate how mobility capital could extend the cultural capital accumulation of international students, which result in 'cosmopolitan' identities that benefit the individuals, especially in employment. Besides advantages in terms of cosmopolitanism, according to Smith (2007), students also intend to contribute to their sending countries in some ways. In her paper, Smith investigated postgraduate students' experiences in an American university. It was found that these students seek for American educational knowledge and values that would benefit their home country; however, they were also confronted with unequal knowledge consumption and production. The international students felt that they lack 'belongingness' to equally contribute to knowledge as foreigners from the Fourth World. Nevertheless, the attractive American educational brands continue to attract international students due to their perceived established reputations. Moreover, a study on scientists from Poland and Bulgaria highlights that their sojourn to the host countries were motivated by the 'science expenditure' attractiveness of the host countries, which includes facilities and working environment, and also the advantages of working alongside their supervisors or HEIs (Guth and Gill, 2008).

The decision for the study abroad destination could sometimes be due to the political conditions of the receiving countries. For example, in a study by Mostafa (2006), Muslim students were relocated to Canada from the US due to the 9/11 tragedy. Thus, this suggests the influence of global influences in terms of political securities and national securities in the transnational spaces between the sending and receiving countries, especially in the UK and US (Asmar, 2005; Mostafa, 2006; King and Raghuram, 2012).

3.2.2 Motivation and Gender

I realise that studies that simply compare male and female results can sometimes be too simplistic and overstate differences, which potentially downplay the similarities across both genders, and also the different views and experiences within those of a particular gender (or who identify as a particular gender)[12]. Previous studies that have discussed gender and international student mobility include Salisbury et al. (2010), Holloway et al. (2012), Martin (2014), Sondhi and King (2017) and, most recently, Moskal (2018). In Salisbury and colleagues' (2010) study, it was found that there were several gender differences in terms of the factors to pursue study abroad. The findings in the quantitative study indicated that students who identified as male and female were, to an extent, attracted to and encouraged by different forms of capital that study abroad could offer. Although generally financial and human capital did not have any influence in terms of men and women's intention for study abroad, their prior habitus and social and cultural capital aspirations did have an effect on their aim for studying abroad. For example, men were more likely to be encouraged by their personal beliefs, peers and experiences; meanwhile, women were more likely to be encouraged by their parents or other prominent figures and educational perspectives.

In a study that hits close to home, Boey (2013) found there was significant disparity in terms of the motivations for women and men from Malaysia to pursue their international education in Australia. From this study, women participants' motivations for study were more likely to be related to seeking freedom and experiencing a 'novel' lifestyle, while male participants' motivations were more likely to be related to a more instrumental purpose for international education such as acquiring their degrees, with less emphasis on socially-related aspirations.

In conclusion, the previous literature surrounding the motivations, purposes and aspirations for international education discourse suggest that sojourns were motivated by the desire for forms of capital accumulation, which benefit the sojourners involved in the transnational labour market but, also, in terms of their personal growth through exposure to other cultures. Furthermore, Rizvi (2010) suggests there is a benefit in terms of the professional identities of those in international education.

[12] See Francis and Paechter (2015)

3.3 Studies on International Students' Everyday Experiences

Previous research on international students' struggle with 'acculturation' [13] and adaptation in their host countries are abundant. The issues reported by these studies include language barriers, experience of microagressions[14], educational issues such as contrasting learning cultures between the host and home countries, feelings of isolation, as well as difficulties in adjusting to practical activities such as accommodation and transportation arrangements (Porazli and Grahame, 2007). These assimilation issues experienced by the international students are arguably the result of acculturation in which two or more cultures are in contact (Berry, 2005). These challenges, if not overcome, could result in students feeling lonely and depressed. Furthermore, according to Reay et al. (2001), who applied Bourdieu, with regard to higher education, 'non-traditional' students such as international students often have problems fitting into the UK higher education system; consequently, these institutions should offer support instead of regarding the students as 'deficient'.

I now go on to discuss in more detail some of the key issues identified in the literature surrounding international students' experiences, which include learning, relationships, 'micro aggressions', and issues for student-parents. As noted elsewhere in the thesis, existing literature on international students' experience tends to focus on undergraduate rather than postgraduate students; however, since much of the work focuses on experiences in institutional settings, it is important for these studies to also be discussed here.

3.3.1 Learning and supervision

First of all, one of the important aspects in studying abroad is the learning experience itself, as it is the primary purpose of these students' sojourn. A number of challenges can potentially affect the students physically and emotionally. In terms of education, students' academic expectations are amongst the problems reported in the literature. First of all, the different transnational space within which the individuals operate will likely be a highly contrasting 'field' linked with contrasting individual 'habitus' for those who feel 'at home' in these spaces from their home country. These spaces or fields of the host country, as suggested by Bourdieu, will likely come with their own

[13] Assimilation to a different culture, typically the dominant one. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

[14] A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

long history, political and socio-cultural practices that require the international students to learn and play the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 99).

In terms of teaching and learning styles, much of the existing literature discusses the clash between the 'East' and 'West'. Again, as with gender, we need to recognise that such categories are socially constructed, and this may reflect stereotypical assumptions that are, in Said's (1993) terms, a product of essentialist 'Orientalist' thinking. Often, comparative studies between these regions may unwittingly emphasise perceived differences rather than similarities. With these caveats in mind, studies in the literature tend to suggest that overall universities that are usually considered to be located in the 'West' are more likely to place an emphasis on critical thinking, and some international students may not be so familiar with this form of pedagogy (Rear, 2017).

Next, in terms of classroom discussions, although international students may pass the necessary language requirements, according to Mills (1997), they may have difficulties in understanding local students' speech due to their pace as well as cultural context. In another study (Osmond and Roed, 2010), it was found that international students and local students prefer to have work in groups with others from similar ethnic backgrounds, this is largely due to avoiding language problems. Furthermore, in terms of group work, previous literature also suggests that for second language learners, being in groups with other international students could provide emotional comfort for the students.

Next, international students also come with previous 'habitus' in terms of academic achievement. It is reported in Chen (1999) and Mori (2000) that international students who were previously high achievers in their home country had similar expectations during their sojourn. This could sometimes add pressure to the students to perform as well as they used to back home. Additionally, these students also experienced pressure from their sponsors and family back home to perform well in their studies (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000).

Furthermore, the rapport between lecturers and students is also often reported as being significantly different (Deem and Brehony, 2000; Leask, 2009). For example, participants in Barron's (2007) study felt that it is rude to have more casual relationships with their lecturers, as with the domestic students, as they felt this demonstrates less respect for their lecturers. These 'clashes of cultures' between the international students' expectations and the realities in 'Western' universities could

affect the students to adapt successfully during their sojourn. This is in contrast with Asian values where power distance is apparent between students and their teachers. According to Bourdieu (1987, p. 92), as cited in Swartz (1997, p.7), this is vital as a way to maintain unity and improve individuals' positions in the social order. However, in the present day, according to Leathwood and Read (2009), the power relations tend to be less present in UK universities.

3.3.2 Language

Next, in relation to international students' experience, language experience during study abroad seems to be a prominent focus of research. International students' challenges with English language can affect them both academically and socially (Chen, 2009). In Brown's (2008) study on graduate international students, it was found that although the students fulfilled the English language requirement (IELTS) the majority of the students felt anxiety and embarrassment in relation to their language use. This resulted in the students forming relationships with other students from the same country. Also, previous research studies have reported a relationship between international students' academic performance with their English language proficiency (Poyrazli, et al., 2001; Stoynoff, 1997; Zhang and Brunton, 2007). In terms of academic experience, language proficiency could pose a challenge for international students to comprehend academic tasks (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000).

Next, in terms of social interactions, language can pose a challenge for international students to integrate successfully with the host community. For example, previous studies (Barrat and Huba, 1994; Poyrazli, et al., 2002) suggest that international students could adjust themselves better in their respective host countries if they have good relations with the local community. However, according to Allen and Higgins's (1994) study, international students had problems understanding local accents, speaking pace as well as colloquial terms. Also, according to Trahar (2007, p. 17), 'language skills and intellectual ability are often conflated in people's minds'. This, to some extent, demonstrates the issue of legitimacy and power between native and non-native speakers, indirectly.

Furthermore, one particular study stressed the importance of transnational spaces of the learners. Lin's (2014) study applied Bourdieu's framework to look into the international students' language experience in Australian HE. The qualitative study found that the students' prior habitus, present experiences and future trajectories are

required in terms of realigning to the 'rules of the game', as conceived by Bourdieu. The study also emphasised the importance of agency in seeking different forms of capital, which is required as proficiency in English language alone is not enough to satisfy their educational demands. This suggests how the different forms of capital are transferrable and could help individuals to attain their personal goals.

Meanwhile, in the aspect of language use and social interactions, Fotovation's study (2012) found that there may be gender differences in terms of PhD students' intentionality and agency in engagement with others. Furthermore, in the same study, Fotovation (2012) found that the students' aspirations, past encounters, social and cultural backgrounds and study sponsors could affect the students' socialisation process and institutional membership. Although the findings were based in Australia, similar backgrounds that the PhD students have may suggest similar predicaments faced by the participants in the present study.

In terms of learning experiences, these previous studies suggest similar understanding: the importance of the transnational spaces that the international students operate in, and how their habitus has to be realigned to meet their educational goals. However, this habitus change depends on their own degree of agency, as well as their past, present and future trajectories.

3.3.3 Relationships

Besides learning experiences, the social network that the students establish during their sojourn can also affect the students' adaptation to their new environment. Researchers suggest that support from social networks is important to ensure smooth transition in higher education (Wilcox et al., 2005). These relationships or friendships that individuals forge throughout their lifetime are argued to be essential to fulfil their personal and emotional needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Huitt, 2004), which includes 'belongingness and love needs', relationships and friendships fall under the third important human psychological need. According to Wilcox et al. (2005), informal relations that individuals foster could bring better academic and emotional support compared to institutional efforts. Therefore, since the students' existing social network prior their sojourn is often geographically far from them, institutions should intervene to support the students socially. Due to moving far away from home, it is suggested that international students experience not only a loss of social capital, but also cultural capital related to their home countries.

In terms of different friendship formation of these friendships during sojourn, Bochner et al. (1977) have established a model which shows the types of friends in sojourners' lives which include co-nationals, host nationals, and other international communities. I will next discuss the literature surrounding the different types of relationships and friendships formed during international students' sojourns.

3.3.3.1 Co-nationals

First of all, referring to Bochner's (1977) model, 'co-national' can be described as other students from the sojourners' countries of origin. These students' role is to help maintain and express their cultures. However, according to Ward et al. (2001), if the support from the co-nationals is strong in the country of sojourn, the international students would seek less interactions with host nationals. Friendships with co-nationals have both advantages and disadvantages. In terms of advantages, this network of friends, who are likely to share some of the same emotions as sojourners, provides a safe space for them to explore new cultures through interactions with each other (Woolf, 2007). Besides that, they also could provide emotional support and a sense of cultural identity; however, on the flip side, the sojourners may encounter problems in terms of language acquisition, which could further affect their adaptation in the host country (Maundeni, 2001). Another disadvantage, according to Ward and Searle (1991), is that the support the sojourners gain from other co-nationals who share their cultural identity may result in an unwillingness to adapt to new cultures. Furthermore, although co-nationals could support the sojourners in a short term manner, it would affect the sojourners later intercultural transformation (Kim, 2001). From this, what I could infer is that support from co-nationals is important for the sojourners, especially during the transitory stage, because of the similar emotional and personal state of the sojourners; however, longer periods of time clinging to these friendships could present detrimental future effects to the sojourners especially in terms of language acquisition and the sojourners' overall assimilation in the host society.

3.3.3.2 Host nationals

Secondly, according to Bochner (1977), host nationals refer to individuals of the host countries of the sojourners. Their role, according to Bochner, is to nurture the sojourners' educational and professional goals. Although sojourners yearn for friendships with host nationals, according to Sawir et al. (2008), they felt disappointed, as their expectation of more opportunities to interact and develop friendships with host

nationals could not be met. Besides that, more contact with host nationals would also benefit the sojourners by improving their language competence, social adaptation and overall satisfactory experience in the host country (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Harrison and Peacock (2010) also found that a few students feared making cultural *faux pas* when discussing issues regarding 'race' and feared being perceived as insensitive or racist. Furthermore, Harrison and Peacock (2010) also suggest the existence of 'silent power play' between international students and host nationals, where the international students are considered as 'incompetent' and the host nationals as 'experts', although, according to Cathcart et al. (2006), the host nationals would take their role as 'cultural host' in helping their international peers in the classroom in terms of language.

Nevertheless, as reported in previous research studies, integrating into the host country has proved to be no easy feat. Much of the challenge is attributed to language. According to Kim (1994), international students are at times perceived as anti-social by the host nationals if they speak and socialise with other students' of the same ethnic background. However, this could be due to the experience of 'micro aggressions' and/or other commitments that the students have. Furthermore, as asserted by Jackson (2010), 'negative experiences of unmet expectations may result in elevated levels of stress, homesickness, a heightened sense of identification with one's in-group, and rejection of host nationals' (p.6). According to Kudo and Simkin (2003), good spoken English is important to establish intercultural friendships. They argue that international students also should be 'aggressive' and proactive in terms of their social interactions with others – in this way shifting the emphasis of adaptation onto individual international students. This is also stressed by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000, p. 173):

> It is through intentional social interactions with members of the other culture, through continuous attempts to construct new meanings through new discourses that one becomes an equal participant in new discursive spaces.

This echoes, in some ways, Hofstede's (1991) notion of cultural tolerance based on contact with others from different backgrounds, which hopefully results in the sojourners' acceptance that no single culture is superior to another. However, sojourners also are sometimes dealing with perceived discrimination by their host communities due to their race or ethnicity (Kim, 1994). Besides that, in terms of commitment, the students' commitment to their family and other matters could also be a factor (Kudo and Simkin, 2003). These papers essentially highlight the importance of the individuals' language ability as well as agency in social interactions with others in the host country.

Based on previous research studies, many, if not all, only stressed the disadvantages of not forming friendships with the host nationals. Contrary to the perspectives on co-nationals, I feel there is a need to also study why these friendships with host nationals are not pursued by sojourners. Furthermore, this also sheds light on the importance of the host nationals 'presence' in the sojourners lives to ensure that the sojourners adapt successfully in the host country, especially when it comes to language acquisition.

3.3.3.3 Other nationals

Finally, individuals of other nationalities, according to Bochner (1977), could offer recreational support for the sojourners. Individuals of other nationalities could be considered as 'being in the same boat'. This common ground can give the sojourners the comfort of knowing that they are not alone. There are, arguably, several advantages to friendships with sojourners of other nationalities. First of all, in terms of language, according to Yeh and Inose (2003), sojourners would experience less anxiety with their foreign accent. Next, sojourners would get to learn about other cultures besides the host country's cultures.

Although this literature discusses the importance of friendships to sojourners, it is important to note how previous research studies often discuss the issue surrounding language such as accent and proficiency as a determinant to successful integration into the host community, besides other factors. As the literature demonstrated, 'brushing shoulders' with host nationals will not only help the sojourners in terms of their language improvement, but it is also a key to successful adaptability in the host country.

Townsend and Poh (2008) report that international students in Australia expressed difficulties in socialising with the locals. Additionally, Chinese students in New Zealand found that although they wanted to make more local friends, opportunities to socialise with the locals were minimal (Zhang and Brunton, 2007). Cultural backgrounds are also seen as an important factor in international students' adaptation ability. For example, Triandis (1999) and others have argued that East Asian cultures can be characterised as more 'collectivist' than other cultures (Triandis, 1999), international students from Asian countries may have more difficulties to foster friendships due to the contrasting cultures of the westerners, which can be characterised as more individualist (Mori, 2000; Yeh and Inose, 2003) (bearing in mind the caveat discussed above whereby it is problematic to place too much weight on generalisations between entire 'cultures'). International students from arguably more collectivist Asian backgrounds could also be

experiencing loneliness being away from their families during their sojourn (Lee et al., 2004). On this matter, Khawaja and Stallman (2011) suggest that this results in the international student retaining their beliefs and cultural values as support. However, new research studies suggest that international students may foster better relationships during their sojourn if they are perceived to have more 'personable' 'outgoing' personality traits (Read, et al., 2018; Brisset, et al., 2010; Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006; Ying and Han, 2006).

This brings the question of the factors influencing friendship formation in universities. A recent study investigating friendships in a UK university (Read, et al., 2018) found that although it is ostensibly a personal relationship, social factors such as an individuals' gender, age and ethnicity continue to be found as influencing aspects in terms of friendship formation. Furthermore, this would be more an issue to those of 'non-traditional' backgrounds such as those of ethnic minority or mature students. This echoes a study by Reay et al. (2001) regarding the experiences of the non-traditional students such as international students in UK HEIs. In a new environment, where international students seek to form new bonds with their community as a way to achieve social capital, at times, the factors mentioned seem to be a dividing factor.

In another study involving graduate students in Australia, Leask (2011) found that both international and home students felt that although they recognised the value of being able to work with people from other backgrounds, due to avoiding intercultural problems such as language barriers, the students did not take full advantage of the opportunities working with other each other. Furthermore, even with institutional interventions that are conducted to encourage this, the students rarely engage in such activities; which, therefore, suggests the need to monitor the implementation of these activities at micro levels (Volet and Ang, 1998; Leask, 2011). Furthermore, Volet and Ang (1998) indicate that instead of pointing out that these problems are due to a language barrier, the issue should be stressed on the individuals' lack of effort and patience for successful communication to occur. This suggests that individual agency is essential in their adaptation during their sojourn. The lack of 'that human touch' could result in feelings such as homesickness, loneliness and depression among international students.

3.3.4 Doctoral education journey

Next, I will discuss aspects of the literature surrounding PhD students, which are less present in international student research. Besides the various capital gains of international education discussed in section 3.2.1, for research students, study abroad helps them to develop their professional identities (Rizvi, 2000). This is developed through the training itself as well as social relations formed. In a qualitative study by Borg et al. (2009), which explored the experiences of PhD students from the science and engineering fields, it was found that the relationships students' forged played an important role in their doctoral journey. Specifically, it was found that for these students, relationships with supervisors and other PhD and postdoctoral students were quoted as integral to their integration process in their institution. In another study by Hasrati (2005), on engineering and social sciences or humanities PhD students, it was similarly found for the engineering students in Borg et al.'s (2009) study and that, in contrast, for social sciences or humanities students, they worked more closely with their supervisors or, otherwise, alone. In terms of language use, this not only suggests the importance of the students' social network during their doctoral experience, but also the range of people with whom the students would interact.

In a study by Yu and Wright (2015), it was revealed that the major challenges for international students in Australia were socio-cultural and academic adaptation matters. In terms of socio-cultural adaptation, it was perceived that there was a limited opportunity to meet and develop friendships as well as the absence of student support at the institution. It was also reported that the nature of the research journey for the students was highly individualised which led to several feeling isolated and homesick[15], thus supporting the research described above in relation to undergraduate students. Moreover, in terms of academic adaptation, students from the same study[16] expressed practical issues such as provision of study spaces and also assistance from the administrative staff for help such as access for printing and library resources. Other issues raised regarding academic matters were regarding the supervision they received in which a few perceived lack of guidance and feedback that led to feelings of stress and anxiety[17].

Next, in an illuminating casual setting study conducted by Fotovation and Miller (2014) of 'tearoom conversations' of international PhD students, fascinating candid observations were given regarding how the participants in the study perceived their

[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

identity as international students and their local peers. As the participants in the study were all previously language teachers, much of their reflections were on their language experience, which relates closely to the present study. A few of findings from the study include that the limited repertoire of informal English that the international students possess caused problems in participating in interactions with their local peers, which would often include local humour. Fotovation's paper (2012) reports that international PhD students' interactions and engagement were highly influenced by their individual agency and intentionality. In another study, Ryan and Viete (2009) observe the conflicting issues that international students faced, especially in academia where they are required to use language that would be 'appropriate' to the community of scholars in their fields (p. 310). However, the researchers suggested that these interactions in institutions were hindered by the hegemonic nature of Western culture as well as 'nativespeakerdom' [18], which in some ways marginalized international students. Similarly, Archer (2008) found that it is difficult for a few of the Asian participants in the study, who were young academics from minority backgrounds, to fit in and they found themselves having to 'prove' themselves in terms of their literacy abilities and skills.

Although international students are often implicitly characterized as being 'the other' in relation to home students, Tsouroufli's (2015) study found although international PhD students in the UK come from diverse backgrounds in terms of religion, gender, nationality and other factors, having similar values and understandings could surpass these differences in this globalized world. Her participants illustrated in their narratives how similar interests in entertainment, technologies and sports can act as a medium for creating rapport with others. Interestingly, this view is shared by all male students in her study but only one female student. The study also suggests that female students have more difficulties engaging in social activities with other international and home students at their institution's events (Tsouroufli, 2015). This suggests possible contrasts in 'imagined social capital' (Quinn, 2005) or motivations between and female and male students for international education and that there may be some patterns of contrast in experience as demonstrated in Boey (2013) where female students in her study indicated more aspirations for social engagement than men.

3.3.4.1 Relationships with supervisors

Next, probably the more important relationships established by the PhD students concerned in the present study would be rapport with their supervisors (Due et al.,

[18] see Schmitt (2005)

2015; Lu et al., 2012; Son and Park, 2014; Soong, et al., 2015; Warner and Miller, 2015). Supervisors are responsible for overseeing their students' academic projects. One of the issues discussed in the literature concerns how to appropriately address supervisors. According to Hofstede (1996), individuals originating from countries with a high level of power distance would tend to acknowledge their superiors' status. This is often the case for students from more 'collectivist' societies such as Asian countries. According to Lu et al. (2012, p. 3), the hierarchy that the students were used to back in their home countries may result in the students' reluctance to discuss their problems with their supervisors because of worries of being discovered as having poor spoken English. Also, according to Wang and Li (2011) and Son and Park (2014), students from these countries would tend not to directly discuss their problems and expectations with their supervisors. These students also expressed their difficulty in understanding feedback received from their supervisors (Warner and Miller, 2015). Furthermore, on a cultural aspect, according to Myles and Cheng (2003), the more informal relationships between students and supervisors in Western HE institutions could also present ambiguity in how the students' perceived the relationships to be and, to a few, this could be 'disorienting'.

Another issue in doctoral training discourse is that the journey could also increase the experience of loneliness due to a lack of interaction through classes (Sawir et al., 2008), which could also intensify at a later stage during the PhD process (Fotovation, 2012). Other illuminating studies have also explored how international graduate students renegotiate their academic identities to fit Western institutions. As advocated by Barnacle and Mewburn (2010), besides the journey of the doctoral students to become experts in their respective fields, the journey in itself is an 'identity transformation' period for the individual. It was found that students from developing countries have to renegotiate their sense of academic identity in terms of 'criticality' and 'research emphasis and approach' (Robinson-Pant, 2009). Similarly, Rizvi (2010), in his qualitative study, illustrates the complexities of his participants' dilemma in negotiating their identities as researchers in transnational spaces in which they operate—their host and home countries. To illustrate this, two participants in his study, for example, discussed their conflicting predicaments concerning the demands of being critical about situations in their home countries, which is required in their academic studies; however, this might adversely affect their professional identities in their home countries as they were also funded by their states. As an example, in the social science field specifically, Rizvi (2010) discusses how political issues that could be sensitive are important in producing knowledge but may put researchers in these fields in a difficult position. These studies highlight the importance of an understanding of the transnational social spaces that

international doctoral students operate within, especially those funded by their states in their desire to meet the global academic conditions as well as their nation's.

In a similar study that looks into PhD students' transformation in the UK, Tsouroufli (2015) describes her participants as developing a 'hybridity of identities', which captured the essence of 'third space' (Bhabha, 1990) that transnationalism similarly suggests. Through their PhD journeys as international students, the participants in the study indicated a wide range of emotional struggles. In her words (Tsouroufli, 2015, p. 1), "Hybridity encompassed a range of identity positions including shifting old identities, blending local and global identities, and re-defining old identities." These opinions are influenced by her participants' interactions with others around them during their sojourn in their quest for inclusivity and belonging.

3.3.5 Micro aggression

Besides the issues being discussed so far, some degrees of 'micro aggression' (which refers to any unintentional discrimination to others of racial or ethnic minorities) are also reported by international students in their host countries due to their 'race' and religion. These negative encounters that could occur outside campus vicinities would not only affect the students' interactions with people in the host community, but also impact their interactions with their peers at their institutions (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007). According to reports, domestic and European students experienced less micro aggression compared to students from other students from Asia, India, Africa and Middle East countries (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli and Lopez, 2007; Lee and Rice, 2007). Also, according to Harrison and Peacock (2010), there may exist subconscious stereotypes when it comes to specific ethnicities such as 'Chinese' people, for example, as I have noted earlier, to assume all individuals from South and East Asian countries will conform to a characterization of being introverted and collectivist which, according to Said (1993), can be stereotyped by the West as the notion of the 'inscrutable oriental'.

Besides 'race', students may also experience micro aggression due to their religious beliefs. In a study at a post-1992 university in the UK, Stevenson (2014) found that students could experience isolation and exclusion because of their religious beliefs and practices. The study, which looks into students from Sikh, Muslim, Jewish and Christian backgrounds, illuminates the challenges of navigating everyday experiences at their institution in this matter. This study sheds light on the possible challenges that the participants in my study encountered due to their religious beliefs as well, as the

majority of my student participants are Muslim. Besides that, religious practices emerged as important not only in forging an Italian cultural identity (Ganga, 2005; Fortier, 2000), but also in helping migrants to define their social role (Maynard et al. 2008) in the host country. Astin et al. (2011), furthermore, found that sojourners can gain spiritual and religious gains from study abroad programmes. Similarly, Abdullah's (2011) study on international students from Malaysia in Australia found that religious activities could be seen as a way to maintain their cultural identity, as well as a support during difficult times.

In a study by Holloway et al. (2012), besides the importance of class, as often highlighted in international student mobility literature, the study stressed the significance of gender and religion in the accumulation of cultural capital. The study, which was conducted on Kazakhstani undergraduate students in the UK, emphasized the importance of Islam in the participants' everyday life experiences. It was found that their experiences are gendered. For example, study abroad is seen as increasing opportunities in the home labour markets, which are male-dominated. The study illuminates that men and women experience class differently, and it is greatly influenced by religion and sexuality.

3.3.6 Student-parents

A less well-researched aspect of the literature on international students relates to students who are also parents. Doctoral students, as well as undergraduates, who are married or in partnerships, face challenges in terms of mobility and managing other responsibilities besides their studies (Ackers, 2004; 2010). There is some literature specifically on the difficulties for parents/primary carers (often women) in STEM fields who are pursuing their doctoral and post-doctoral degrees (Ackers, 2004; Oliver, 2009). According to a qualitative study by Brooks (2013), which explored the motivations and experiences of international student-parents studying for HE degrees in the UK, it was found that the students' experiences were highly gendered. In her study, she found that male participants' motivations for sojourn tended to be the status of the institutions, while for female participants, it was more likely to be influenced by their social relationships, such as the logistics of their husbands' or partners' sojourn. Moreover, during the sojourn, female participants would more often have more responsibility in caring for children alongside their studies, while male participants had more time for their studies (Brooks, 2013).

Interesting studies also discussed students who have families with them (spouses and children) during their sojourn. In a study by Phelps (2016), she found that student parents with children were confronted with the complexities of the imagination of 'home' and 'belonging' for their offspring who begin to grow up in a culture and environment different from their own. The participants in the study expressed their feelings of ambivalence - both pride and fear for their children.

The body of literature within student-parent research studies also demonstrated that the students' experiences are gendered in terms of gender patterns. According to Coles and Fetcher (2012), although it is recorded that women are likely to migrate for the purpose of pursuing highly-skilled opportunities, they still tend to be tied to prior social relations, expectations and customs. On this point, a recent study (Martin, 2014) argued that these social expectations on women are changing and are intergenerational.

Also, in earlier studies on women's involvement and investment in their children's education, women were found to be active individuals in their children's education (Yeoh and Huang 2011; Huang and Yeoh, 2005). The studies also reported that these women (also known as 'astronaut mothers'[19]) are also more prone to giving up their jobs for the period of the sojourn (Yeoh and Huang, 2011; Waters, 2002). This demonstrates, to some extent, the complex dynamics of emotion and the importance given to the accrual of 'emotional capital' that is seemingly particularly gendered (Nowotny, 1981; Reay, 2004b) in this literature. Although the present study did not intentionally look into the participants' family roles, this literature is relevant in giving insights into the participants' habitus and motivations in relation to these dynamics during their sojourn.

In conclusion, international students seem to face many challenges. These challenges include difficulties in relation to language, education, 'micro aggression', relationships, as well as the mundane practical difficulties of living abroad. The next section will discuss aspects of student agency in response that are sometimes characterized as 'coping strategies' in the literature.

3.3.7 Coping strategies

In the plethora of research on international students abroad, the majority of the studies report that Asian students seemingly had more difficulties during their sojourn compared to other international students. These studies tend to be psychological rather

[19] Astronaut parent is a family member who resides in different countries across the world. This represents transnationalism, and the term was coined by Aihwa Ong (1999).

than sociological and, consequently, place an emphasis on the individual that can be seen by more sociological critics as a 'deficit model' that discounts the social and contextual dynamics of inequality that influence such experiences (Donnelly, 2002). The following studies thus need to be discussed with this critique in mind.

A number of research studies (Berry, 2006; Ward et al., 2001) report that international students' 'coping strategies' could impact the assimilation process into the host society. According to a research study by Khawaja and Dempsey (2008), the levels of stress experienced by local and international students were not significantly different; however, the international students' coping strategies were described as 'maladaptive', which included 'dysfunctional' coping such as denial, substance use, self-blame, venting, and behavioural disengagement. Moreover, they argue that psychological distress could be displayed through obsessive-compulsive symptoms, which include worrying, contemplating on mistakes and perfectionism. In Chataway and Berry's (1989) study, Asian international students were apparently also prone to 'maladaptive' coping strategies such as using drugs, alcohol, food and exercise.

One of the reasons for international students from Asian countries 'maladaptive' ways of coping with stress is put forward as the stress on emotional control (Kim et al., 2005). Also, according to Wei et al. (2007), seeking assistance from peers and professionals may indicate that they fail to control their emotions. This, in turn, might result in feeling ashamed and losing face (Wei et al., 2007). Furthermore, Asian international students would not talk about the challenges that they were facing during their sojourn with their families back home in order not to worry them (Constantine et al., 2005; Heppner et al., 2006). However, as mentioned above, it is important not to over-generalise or fall into an 'orientalist' stereotype when discussing these dynamics (Said, 1993).

On this subject, one of the services provided by host universities includes counselling services. Despite the service provided, in a study in an Australian university by Ang and Liamputtong (2008), it was found that a majority of the international students did not use the service, most often because of the social stigma that was attached to mental health problems as well as the counsellors' lack of cultural knowledge. Similarly, in a qualitative study by Abdullah (2011), on Malaysian postgraduate students in Australia, it was found that none of the participants sought support from counselling centres but, instead, received support from their spouses, other friends, Malaysian friends in Australia and through religious means. Her study also found that the postgraduate students' faith in Allah (God) as support was crucial during difficult times. According to

other studies, God as an attachment could be considered as support (Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, 2008; Bostik and Everall, 2007). This suggests that the international students' cultural practices such as religious beliefs are sometimes strengthened during their sojourn. As discussed in the literature thus far, these experiences - both good and unpleasant - pull resources from 'here' and 'there' and highlight the sojourners themselves experiencing their transnational lives. Also, according to Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), the study abroad experiences actually tend to increase the sojourners knowledge of their own backgrounds and cultures, in an added layer to this dynamic. However, despite the challenges faced by international students in their own personal journey to find belonging in the host country, individuals' agency is an important element to confront these challenges and is considered as the most valuable to their personal development (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006; Gu et al., 2010).

Based on my review of past literature on socio-cultural and 'adaptation' experiences of international students, it is clear that much of the existing literature is focused on undergraduate students. Though the focus of the present study is research students, I will be arguing that the experiences and challenges of students are similar, in some respects, to the issues presented in this literature on undergraduates. Besides that, previous research studies have also been focused on the lived experiences of the students in institutional settings, rather than the lived experiences of the sojourners outside their academic institutions. Next, many of the research studies conducted internationally also concentrate on international students from South Asia specifically. However, as demonstrated by Brooks (2010) and Holloway et al. (2012), and through the transnationalism lens, the motivations, experiences, as well as future trajectories of these mobile groups are affected by their past geographical conditions, as their individual conceptions of being 'here' and 'there' will inherently differ.

3.4 Social media and maintaining social ties

The importance of the internet in today's globalised world is undeniable. Social networking sites and mobile applications enable individuals to stay in touch despite any distance in physical location. To an extent, Vertovec (2009, p. 54) describes with affordable communication devices and easy access to the internet, such technology is the 'social glue of transnationalism'. Negotiating everyday demands from the home country becomes easier with today's technology, where sojourners are often seen as 'jugglers', balancing responsibilities of home and the host country where they are situated. The technology, in some ways, blurs the distance between the different localities. Due to sojourn, international students experience the inevitable decrease of

social networks that they are used to from back home, and the internet helps by providing social support and helping maintain social ties (Gray, et al., 2013) especially during the transitional period by contacting the community in the host country. In this internet-driven age, social capital can be fostered or impeded by this technology (Putnam, 2007). As mentioned earlier, doctoral students often experience loneliness and isolation. The participants in Yu and Wright's (2016) study also quoted Facebook as a daily support to decrease loneliness and anxiety as PhD students. In terms of support, according to Gardner (2007), informal social networks could be viewed as a source of support for PhD students. In today's world, social media can be considered as an extra informal social network as a medium of support for the students, besides the support of networks or groups in their respective institutions.

Next, besides being a source for support for adaptation in the host country, social media is also reported as being widely used to maintain transnational social ties. In an extensive qualitative study, which includes transnational families doing 'virtual intimacies' in Australia, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Iran, Singapore and New Zealand, it was found that these families use technology to maintain their transnational social networks (Wilding, 2006). This further demonstrates how today's technology can lessen the effect of migration and distance for transnational families. In a more recent study, Martin and Rizvi (2014) studied how digital media such as television and social networking sites influence how migrants, in this case international students from India and China, experience 'locality, culture, and belonging' during their sojourn in Australian universities. The study (Martin and Rizvi, 2014, p. 1016) illustrates how these sojourners' use and experience of various transnational media results in their sense of home and host country as 'fragmented, deterritorialised, and syncretic' due to the simultaneity that the media provides in this age. In short, the media and technology provide interwoven elements of the experiences of the home country while the sojourners are in the host country. For international students, besides using social media as a way to maintain social ties, it is also used to recreate their cultures during these transnational journeys (Ibid.). This also echoes what Appadurai (1995) describes as the 'mediascape' discussed earlier.

3.5 Identities

I would like to discuss the notion of identities in terms of how international students are positioned in UK HEIs as well as the effects of study abroad on the identities of international students. According to Pavlenko and Norton (2007), 'otherness' is often used to describe individuals in multicultural contexts where words such as 'refugee',

'minority' or 'migrant' are used. This distinguishes the international students, everywhere, including in the UK. These categorisations influence the identities of international students and affect their experiences in terms of how they view themselves as well as others' perceptions. Besides that, literature on international education has reported, to a greater or lesser extent, various forms of identity change or negotiation based on the sojourners experiences abroad, especially through intercultural experiences (Rizvi, 2000; Rizvi, 2009; Gu, 2010; Marginson, 2014, Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). The majority of the literature discusses the emergent identities through study abroad as participants develop cosmopolitan and hybrid identities (as discussed in Chapter 2.4.2). As identities are dynamic in nature, change could happen through intercultural exchange. Furthermore, from the perspective of language, identity change often transpires through interaction with others (Miller, 2004).

Firstly, literature on international education had previously shown how HEIs can position international students as 'aliens' or the 'other'. This description attached to international students suggests that they could be categorised as 'non-traditional students' (Reay, et al. 2001), along with other students not seen to conform to a dominant conception of the 'typical' student as, for example, white, middle-class, and of school-leaving age. As we have discussed, Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) describe those who 'fit' these aspects of identity as more likely to possess a habitus that will allow them to navigate academic culture 'as a fish in water'. Students, who did not fit in, arguably including international students, possibly share some similar experiences. According to Reay (2010), students' learning culture can also be influenced by the institutional habitus. Therefore, it is suggested that experiences of being 'other' or 'a fish out of water' encountered by the students would present an arena where a variety of students similarly struggle for their desire to fit in with their peers, institution and, indeed, wider society. On this point, a study on working-class students in HE institutions by Reay (2010) illustrates that these students have problems fitting in academically and socially. Several of the participants in the qualitative study expressed that they felt their learner identities conflicted with their peers and institutional habitus' which fit in the 'ideal' or traditional categories in UK HEIs. This could be related to the internal students themselves as they could be seen as non-traditional and, in turn, affect their experiences.

Next, the literature on study abroad also discusses how individuals' identities may be affected through international education. In a study, Gu et al. (2010) found that international students experienced change at two levels: personal maturation and intercultural capability towards others. Gu et al. (2010, p. 20) further suggest that

through interacting in the new environment (host country), “they continue to experience improved knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes which enable them to function effectively within both their host and home countries”. Meanwhile another study (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015) investigates the experiences of Chinese students who had experiences of studying in the UK. The mixed-methods study revealed that the participants’ study abroad was often an ‘identity transforming experience’ (p. 947). The time abroad was considered to be an avenue where they experienced transnational social relations, worldviews, and selfhood, besides capital accumulations, which they believe were valuable and beneficial in both personal and professional arenas, upon their return to their home country. The findings also demonstrate that the duration of study is also believed as not affecting their views of the international education that they received (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). This suggests the continuation of a ‘cosmopolitan identity’ that they developed through living transnationally.

3.6 Future pathways

As we previously discussed the motivations and living and learning experiences of international students, this last section of the literature review will discuss the body of literature on international students’ future pathways upon completing their study abroad programmes. In previous literature, it is reported that besides capital concerns, other personal issues such as family responsibilities and personal aspirations seem to be common factors regarding future mobility and trajectories. This section will discuss relevant experiences of migrants who remain in the host countries upon completing their degrees. Although it is beyond the scope of the present study to research this for my participants, this material helps understand their experiences as continuing sojourners and possible challenges as continuing working migrants.

As the sojourners invested in their study abroad, it is generally anticipated that, upon completion, they would seek desirable opportunities in the labour market. These graduates are faced with contemplations of future pathways after completing their doctoral education, which have become more complex and market-driven in the global setting (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Besides this concern, according to Trice and Yoo (2007), PhD students in the US from Southeast Asian countries were more likely to express their decision to return to their home countries upon completion.

Kim’s (2016) study similarly discusses the experiences of international students from Korea in the US. The study, which also looked into experiences of the graduates as

academics in the 'West', revealed that social spaces play an important role for how their academic identity is perceived. The narratives of the participants in the study suggest the importance of 'geographies of cultural capital', as argued by Waters (2006), where the spaces within which the individual operates determines their dispositions and experiences and conversions of the capital forms. As an example, the participants in the study reflected that while their US degrees would set them apart from others in Korea, it is not the case if they were seeking for positions in the US job market, especially if they were competing with other job seekers from the US. A participant from the same study (Kim, 2016) also narrated that his identity as a lecturer was challenged by the students in his lecture because of his English language skills which, in turn, affected his self-esteem and position as an academic in the US.

Also, future pathways could at times be a gendered process. Kim's (2016) study also notes that opportunities in the job market seem to be a challenge more to women than men. In a recent study, Moskal (2018) investigates international graduate students' future pathways finding that, for Asian students in the study, this is proven to be the case. It was found that male participants have greater independence for career choice, while female participants have less autonomy due to family and social pressures. The findings of the study also suggest that the experiences abroad, as a transformation process, influenced their attitudes and dispositions towards their mobility, job opportunities, relationships with others, especially family members, as well as their overall lifestyles. Despite this, as well as the socio-political debates in China in recent years, the findings of the study highlight the gendered norms of gendered expectations amongst Asian families (Ibid.).

Although international education, overall, is valued and acknowledged for the many advantages which would benefit the individuals in the competitive job markets both at home and globally, previous research also suggests that this could also be a disadvantage in certain cases, especially in the sojourners' home labour markets, as documented by Robertson (2013) and Wiers-Jenssen (2013). Robertson (2013), for example, argues that international students' life trajectories are caught in the individuals' selves, the state, as well as what she terms 'assemblages of power'. The 'assemblages of power' refers to the multiple forces that interplay between institution, migration (both at the home and host countries), family and the media. The students' experiences are not homogenous; however, according to Robertson (2013), they follow the same pathways. Meanwhile, Wiers-Jenssen (2013) found that students who have been away from their country of origin could be at a disadvantage compared to home country graduates in the labour market due to their lack of network, contextual

knowledge, as well as lacking information on domestic policies. Due to factors discussed in these two studies, students' mobility and being away from their home countries could, at times, be detrimental to their chances in the labour markets at their respective home countries instead of giving them an edge over others.

Next, in terms of considerations for the sojourners to return to their home countries, besides fulfilling responsibilities to families as previously mentioned, another factor would be their personal aspiration to give back to their country (Smith, 2007), in the form of ideas, knowledge and other contributions, besides monetary. As suggested by Madge et al. (2009), international education could also support the nation-building process. This could be in terms of what Levitt (1998) terms as 'social remittances', as previously mentioned in Chapter 2. Besides that, another reason for return could also be the sojourners developing newfound appreciation for their home country and culture after being away (Kartoshkina, 2015). On the other hand, according to Rizvi (2000), the government feared that Malaysian youth would adopt a westernised social and political view and would remain in the host countries although international education in the globalised world is in line with aspiration of the nation's vision 2020.

3.7 Conclusion to the Chapter

Education challenges experienced by international students, not only relate to the students' experiences in the host country but, also, in managing relationships and issues back home. Based on this literature review, it is established that international students experienced both accumulation and loss of various forms of capital. These experiences of loss and gain are often experienced in a transnational spatial context. Thus, both the literature discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, as well as the review of relevant literature in the present chapter, serves as a foundation to understanding the present study.

It is hoped that this present study will be able to help fill the gap of the lived experiences of doctoral students from Malaysia in the UK in terms of their motivations, academic experiences and future trajectories through a transnational lens. It is intended that the study will render a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these particular participants, giving meaning to their personal experiences in and outside their institutions, home, and the society at large in wider contexts.

Moreover, in terms of the methodology and methods, the majority of the research studies surrounding study abroad are quantitative in nature. Hence, the present

qualitative study adds to the breadth and depth of existing knowledge in this field. Next, in existing qualitative research studies, the methods used in the majority involve interviews (face-to-face or group interviews), as well as written journals kept by the participants. Since, as it is established that technology, in particular social media, is a new way to document experiences, especially to capture the 'in the moment' experiences, narratives from the participants' social media would be a useful medium to analyse, as adopted in the present study, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Research Approach

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology and methods used in the present study to investigate the lived experiences of international doctoral students from Malaysia in the UK. Despite the myriad research studies on international students, there is a comparative lack of studies on postgraduate students' experiences (Bilecen, 2013; Lillyman and Bennett, 2014). What is intended to be explored in the thesis is the under-researched experience of Malaysian international doctoral students with regard to living and learning in the UK. The study has adopted an interpretivist approach to multiple qualitative methods. This involved 27 Malaysian doctoral students in Scotland, UK. The data for the study were collected from February 2016 to September 2018. The data collection process will be further explained in this chapter.

4.2 Epistemological considerations

Firstly, I will discuss my epistemological considerations for the present research. Two commonly cited epistemological stances to research studies are positivism and interpretivism. The positivist approach to research, according to Bryman (2012, p. 28) suggests, "knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws." In contrast, interpretivism suggests that knowledge is constructed from the investigation by the researcher of the phenomenon by the individuals who are engaged in it. Thus, in contrast to positivism, knowledge is then seen as constructed, not discovered. Positivist research is more likely to be quantitative in nature, reflecting a concern to 'measure' reality, whereas interpretative research favours a qualitative approach. As Johnson and Christensen (2010) note, qualitative research allows us to understand the phenomenon by focusing on individuals' perspectives and the nuances of their experience, which is what the present study wishes to explore. Following the work by Gargano (2009), which looks into lived experiences of international students through a transnational lens and Rizvi's (2004) which investigates doctoral students' experiences through a transnational lens under globalisation influences, the present study takes an interpretivist standpoint to investigate the lived experiences of Malaysian doctoral students in the UK.

4.3 Ontological considerations

The ontological paradigm I have chosen – constructionism - is connected to my theoretical framework, discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the epistemological considerations discussed above. Constructionism posits that knowledge, truth and facts are created by society; hence, meanings are given by the people around us (Bryman, 2012). This stance, similarly, is in line with Levitt's (2011) transnationalist argument that individuals draw upon resources from their home country and host country to support their transnational experiences. The ontological position of constructionism argues that a social phenomenon is not only a product of social interactions, thu socially constructed, nor is it static in nature; it is constantly being revised by the actors in the field (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). This position complements Bourdieu's view of habitus, which is constantly being negotiated with the individuals' encounters. Thus, in order to explore the perceptions and experiences of my participants, the study adopts an interpretivist paradigm and constructionist ontological approach to understand the phenomenon, utilising qualitative methods.

4.4 Naturalistic inquiry

The present study takes on naturalistic inquiry whereby it took place in a real-life setting, without being constricted by the researcher's prior assumptions of the data outcomes. The data gathered from the study do not intend to suggest generalisation but, instead, to give meaning to specific cases. According to Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 15), the naturalist "discounting generalizability and the assumption of context-free laws which have enduring truth value (especially as they might relate to human and socio behavioral phenomena)". From this perspective, they further assert that research designs often "emerge, unroll, cascade, or unfold during the research process" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 142) instead of being predefined. In this sense, this study is inductive in nature, which allows for new ideas and knowledge about a phenomenon to unfold as the research progresses. Even though the research started with initial interview questions to guide the research, with inductive approach, I was able to see other issues surrounding the phenomenon that may influence the study. In the present study, for example, during the interviews (see section 4.3.3 below), a few emerging themes resulted in modifying the questions as well as research designs to explore them. Upon completing the interviews, to address a few emerging issues, I also sent the participants follow-up questions to explore these issues further. This presents the emergent design of the present research. The design of the research is also 'bricolage' in terms of methods. A 'bricoleur' which could be defined as jack-of all-trades, and in

qualitative research, it is described as using multiple eclectic qualitative methods intentionally to investigate certain issues, which Mason (2018) compared to being a detective in which a researcher would have to be creative in terms of the data that would support the researcher's understanding.

4.4.1 Qualitative Interviewing

The main research method applied in the study, qualitative interviewing, is perceived as the ideal way to explore the participants' lived worlds. During the interview process, one of the ways for seeking meanings as proposed by Brinkman and Kvale (2015, p. 33) is *'deliberate naiveté'* whereby the researcher should aim to arrive without expected assumptions and expectations, but being open to unexpected issues or information that may arise during the interviews.

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 115) the verbal interview is an embodied communication, especially in face-to-face conduct. According to Trinh (1999), as cited in Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 115), humans are embodied beings, and in entering qualitative interviews, we do so "with a unity of mind and body, that interact", which is "never neutral but carry all the signs of gender, race, class, and so on." I reflect on my positionality and embodied presentation of self in the research process in Section 4.7. Ellingson (2012) also reminds us that 90% is conveyed by bodily manners and gestures, besides what is spoken. Thus, during interview sessions, Ellingson (2012, p. 533) further stresses the importance of "drawing on all your senses" besides "paying attention to how your body responds to your surroundings and to your participants' emotions, body language and gestures, and proximity".

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in the present study. This interview method suited the naturalistic inquiry as it allows freedom for new emerging issues to be explored along with the guided interview questions prepared in the initial stage of the interview. According to Gray (2014), besides the guided questions that the interviewers have, probing for participants' views during the interview sessions in semi-structured interviews would allow for new information which was not anticipated but would help to meet the research objectives. I found this to be relevant to my experience interviewing my participants.

During the face-to-face interviews, I noted a few issues. I was similar to my participants in a few ways. For example, I am a Malaysian student pursuing my PhD in the UK. This common identity that I shared with participants allowed me to understand their

experiences, to an extent, and helped me with my interpretations of experiences in navigating 'here' and 'there'. However, in contrast, this also made it challenging in terms of unravelling our shared assumptions (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). This experience left me in a disjuncture, where in this space, I come with my personal habitus and worldview, but also the critical 'gaze' of a researcher (Gold, 2002; Staeheli and Lawson, 1994).

4.4.2 Facebook status updates

The Facebook data that is incorporated as part of the findings focus on the status updates of the participants, which are already generated in terms of themes from my interviews with the participants. The data from the social media were collected after the face-to-face interviews. It is important to acknowledge that the participants' online status updates varied from one person to the next, and these status updates were treated as narratives similar to that which would derive from interviews with the participants. The incorporation of Facebook status updates as part of participants' narratives is a way of exploring the assertion that we live in a 'network society' as proposed by Castells (1996) as well as virtual media being 'the social glue of transnationalism' according to Vertovec (2004). Thus, the relevance to incorporating data from social media is potentially insightful in relation to the participants' lived experiences in today's globalised world.

For those who migrate for a short or longer period of time, the advancement of technology today is considered as a blessing to stay in touch with their family and friends back home. Besides my own personal experience of social media as an international student, the use of the medium is widely recognised in the literature as an important part of international students' daily lives (see section 3.4), especially to help them with transition to new countries and serve as emotional support to international students.

There are several ways that Facebook is considered as a tool for data collection in the study. Besides the thought-process behind the thesis as explained earlier, most Malaysians abroad use social media to stay informed of activities, news and information; thus, it is considered as an essential tool for recruiting participants. Next, it also serves as a relevant and updated form of diary-keeping for individuals in the modern age. The synchronous nature of Facebook allows their 'friends' to leave comments, which encourages interaction between users and their friends. This feature provides emotional support in some ways to the users. Furthermore, social media gives insights to the 'unspoken' issues that the participants may experience during their sojourn. These issues may or may not arise during the interview sessions and Facebook could aid in

bringing these experiences to light. Besides that, it is also useful as 'right there and then' situations where the participants want to express their feelings or share experiences with their friends and families online. This, in some cases, happened 'in that moment' or is otherwise forgotten and as Facebook is mostly installed in the users' mobile phones, they could easily share their feelings or observations with others.

Potentially, there are also ethical dangers in using Facebook. I contemplated this matter and discussed this with my supervisors and also devoured the current literature on the use of social media, particularly Facebook. One of the most discussed potential ethical risks would be the privacy of participants. This could be seen by the nationwide coverage of Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, facing a lawsuit regarding privacy charges. However, as explained in the plain language statement provided to participants, it is made clear that their identities would be protected by the use of pseudonyms throughout the thesis. Furthermore, information linked to the participants would also be removed to protect their identities. Next, the literature also discussed the potential grey area between what is public and what is public in the social media. Some literature also went as far as to consider the 'emotional' experiences of the users of social media even for the Facebook pages which are made public to everyone. However, some literature argues that as long as consents was given to the researcher, as well as keeping the users' identities confidential, the data could be used in research studies and could be important and beneficial for investigations. I also discuss this further in Section 4.7.

As justified by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 52), "(…) because interviews normally concern things experienced in the past, this centrally involves considerations about the capacity of subjects to remember what they have experienced". The status that students share can be seen as first person narratives (Georgakopolou, 2007) and these narratives are used to share 'in the moment' experiences and also promote conversations amongst their 'friends' on the Facebook network (as revealed in the findings chapters).

4.4.3 Follow-up email interview questions

Besides semi-structured interviews and Facebook status updates, as part of an emergent design to answer the questions I had after transcribing the data from the interviews, I also emailed the participants with follow-up questions. According to Gaiser and Schreiner (2011), electronic email is one of the oldest methods of online data gathering,

which is used to distribute and collect surveys, and conduct interviews and focus groups.

One of the advantages to the researchers is that this time period allows an extra degree of agency and power in the research process for the participants in terms of controlling the data and, in a practical consideration, the responses from the participants are in written form, thus eliminating transcribing work which, in turn, saves time. Besides these justifications, I used email (and other types of CMC mediums) as it is considered as an integral part of every PhD student's daily routine, which they are also familiar and comfortable with. According to Crook and Booth (1997), with the rise of technology and computer-mediated communication (CMC), there is a growing trend of researchers communicating with their respondents via email; Kralik, Koch and Brady (2000: 911) also compare this tool as 'pen pal relationships'. As previously I achieved some success by recruiting my respondents using the CMC medium, I believed that I could continue by applying it to other parts of my research as well and, as expected, based on the responses from my participants, I perceived it as a useful tool for my research.

Also, I found email to be an effective way to gather 'reflective' thoughts from my participants. Based on the participants' responses, I perceived that email enabled me to elicit information, especially to a few of the respondents who I observed as less 'engaging' during my interview sessions with them. Given the time aspect that plays a role in this method, where the respondents had the ability 'to ponder' on the questions without the 'time element' stress to come up with responses immediately, the respondents are able to think and articulate their responses with some time via email. It is also apparent that for a few of the questions, the participants needed the extra time to 'reflect' on their responses—especially when discussing about 'the changes that they experienced' and their 'future plans after completing their PhD'. I believe that for similar questions that need some 'thinking' on the participants' part, email is an effective way as a tool for reflection in research.

4.4.4 Analytic memo as fieldwork diary

Another useful tool for qualitative data gathering is for qualitative researchers to write analytic memos during the data gathering process. According to Saldana (2016), these analytic memos can be considered as journal entries or blogs kept by researchers. As described further by Saldana (2016) this can be a space for researchers to "dump their brains" as they experience the whole atmosphere, which could include impressions on the participants and other relevant phenomena. The outcome of this process would mean that the researcher would be thinking and writing about what they experienced

further. These memos are considered personal conversations between researchers about their data (Clarke, 2005).

I found this process useful and include an example below:

Interview with Fira at her flat at [Anonymised], 20th August 2016, Saturday, 1030AM

I arrived at her house about 10 minutes late as it was my first time in [Anonymised city]. She is a student based at S1, studying [STEM field]. She mentioned that her previous degree is not nutrition, and one of the challenges is to learn the basics of nutrition.

I took the subway to [Anonymised] and walked from there to [Anonymised] where her flat is. It was roughly around 30 minutes. When I reached her flat, she was from her office, which is nearby and we walked together to her place. She was very friendly and I immediately felt welcomed. She explained that when she first arrived in [Anonymised city], her family came with her, her husband and son, and since her husband was offered to go to Mecca for Hajj, she is now on her own and renting temporarily with two friends but will move to a different house soon in October when her family returns. We talked about accommodation as she prepared fried noodles for us. We mostly conversed in Malay as she seemed more comfortable with the language. After we had eaten, I explained my study and she mentioned that she is interviewing as well and said that she was a bit nervous interviewing people here, part of it is because of language, but will take that as a challenge. She mentioned that she meets her supervisors regularly (every week) to discuss about her research and really appreciates the guidance she receives from her supervisors.

She is a member of an usrah group and contacted her friends in her usrah group if they would like to participate in my research as well, which I really appreciate.

She mentioned that the thought of interviewing is daunting to her but it surprised her that she has a lot to share with me. Halfway through the interview, the battery on my recorder ran out and I recorded down our interview on my notebook before I remembered that I could record the interview on my phone.

Sample from my fieldwork diary

My reflections in my fieldwork notes, such as above, serve several purposes. First of all, I was able to reflect and prepare myself better for the interview sessions. For example, during this particular interview session, I learnt to leave earlier to arrive at unfamiliar

locations, as well as being more prepared with alternative recording devices should any problems arise. Secondly, from these notes, I was able to reflect on the connection between what the participants shared with me during my interviews with them, and also my personal thoughts on the issues that would help during the data analysis as, during this stage, I began formulating the emerging themes from the interviews. These, as suggested by Saldana (2016) earlier, not only helped me to better prepare for future interviews but, also, data analysis later. Additionally, this way also acts as a support for the emerging design of the study for the naturalistic approach, as previously described.

4.5 Sampling and selection criteria

Another important part of the data collection is the sampling technique. In contrast to quantitative research, there is a less clear-cut way or particular recipe when it comes to sampling for qualitative research (Mason, 2018). When considering the sample for my qualitative research, I adopted what Mason (2018) describes as a less conventional sampling which is a less rigid manner of presenting a 'population'. Mason (2018, p. 53) further describes, this as "principles and procedures used to identify and gain access to relevant data sources that are potentially generative in relation to a wider universe, and to select from them for the purposes of gaining meaningful insights into your intellectual puzzle." In this sense, as Mason (2018, p. 54) advocates in consideration of sampling, researchers thus need to consider sampling the 'universe' instead of merely the population. Therefore, I used purposive sampling, which allows me to interact with data that I was analysing while I was in the research field. This strategy complements my naturalistic inquiry, as explained earlier, as it allows me to test my theory from my ongoing analysis and data gathering methods (Mason, 2018). In relation to the study, I am interested in the lived experiences of Malaysian international students who were pursuing their doctoral degrees in the UK. Due to the theoretical considerations that I previously established, I further defined the participants for the research.

The selection criteria of my research is as follows:

1) The individual should be a PhD student from Malaysia currently studying in a University in Scotland, UK.
2) The participants had been in the UK for at least six months to allow them to draw enough experiences to be discussed during the interview sessions.
3) The individual should have a Facebook account.

Besides the criteria selection above, in order to have an equal gender representation, to the best of my ability, I intentionally decided to recruit equal numbers of men and

women for the study. Scotland, UK was chosen because my literature review had shown that, in the UK, research by international students from Malaysia was concentrated in England. I hoped that the study would highlight the lived experiences of the participants who lived in different transnational spaces than those often cited in the literature. The diversity of population between Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland is also different. Thus, this would offer varied experiences, for example in terms of language and cultures. Due to my theoretical framework, this would affect the habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1992) of my participants.

4.5.1 Recruiting participants

I started scouting for potential participants before arrival in Glasgow; I searched for information online and came across a Facebook page for Malaysians in the UK. The group seemed to be active and often advertised any functions on the page. I knew that these gatherings were held sporadically, so I decided to attend as many functions as I could to scout other Malaysian people here, mainly to socialise and speak in our 'mother tongue', as well as eat the Malaysian food that I deeply missed! During these Malaysian Community social gatherings events were held such as for Ramadhan, Eid celebrations, 'Pasar Hari' (Day market) as well as other Malaysian cultural festivities. These gatherings were usually held at local mosques, or other community spaces. During the summer when the Scottish weather was lovely and permits outdoor activities, the Malaysian community would organise barbeques, picnics, and games at nearby parks. During these gatherings, where we would introduce and get to know one another, it is inevitable that 'who are you?', 'how long have you been here?', and 'are you studying or working?' would occur. If there were students at the events, we would talk about our studies, and if I found them to fit the criteria to be potential participants, I would ask them if they would be interested to participate in my research. If they indicated their interest, I would take their contact information, and ask them if it would be okay to 'add' them as a friend on Facebook. Besides that, I also used the internet to go through the Malaysian Community Facebook pages to seek for potential participants. Through my online browsing, many times, I would come across familiar faces that I met at the functions I previously attended or I added as my friends on Facebook. After the application for data collection was approved by the University of Glasgow's College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, I began contacting my participants and my fieldwork began.

Besides the participants who I met from the functions and Facebook pages, I also posted on Facebook group walls (that had to be approved by the group's creator) to recruit the

participants. I only achieved two responses from this. This was not a successful method for recruitment due to several reasons. First, due to the participants' preference and lifestyle, many chose to turn off the 'notifications' settings for Facebook activities such as incoming messages, wall posts and others, which allow the users to customise them accordingly. This resulted in my message 'not appearing' on the users' timelines. Besides that, the wall posts would achieve much less attention if there was less activity on the posts (received less 'thumb ups' or 'likes' and comments). Also, the users might be inactive, deactivated their accounts, or not have/uninstalled the application from their phones for various reasons. Having not received much success through this method, I sent personal messages (or direct messages) to potential participants. From my experience, this proved to be a more successful method as I received more responses for possible recruitment. There was also one participant who asked me if it was okay for her to forward my information to others that she knew would be interested to participate in my study, which I appreciated. Hence, a few of the participants were recruited through 'snowballing', as a way to access hard-to-reach populations (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). I also asked the participants I interviewed if they knew anyone who would be interested in my study. However, through this snowballing process, I also kept in mind that they should comply with the criteria that I set earlier.

4.5.2 Place, time and length of interviews

The time, place, and length of the interview sessions that I had with my participants varied. Concerning time, most of the interviews were conducted outside office hours (8AM-5PM) on weekdays. There were also interviews, which were conducted on weekends, based on my participants' requests. As I was asking them a favour to be interviewed, most of the time I complied with the day and time the participants chose to be interviewed, and usually they were near the University's grounds. Many of the interviews were conducted at a common area such as my school building when no-one was using it; others were conducted in my participants' offices at their schools, coffee shops, as well as the University cafeteria. I felt that the places where I conducted the interviews might impact not only on the quality of the recordings of the interviews, but also the information that the participants shared with me. For instance, as I reflected, a few participants were more reluctant or avoided discussing certain issues in depth when they were in a public place, especially concerning challenges and religious issues. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) discuss the importance of the 'nonhumans and surroundings' in conducting interviews. As much as the actual talk in interviews matter, what is taking place during the talk, or the 'material context of the talk' is also equally important. As the participants were all bilingual (English and Malay languages), code-

switching and other forms of language strategies were used to talk about these issues when they arise from the discussion in public places. Besides the face-to-face interviews, I also contacted the participants as a follow-up by email to ask for clarification on certain issues as well as on emerging issues during the interview sessions that I had with them, as explained earlier[20].

4.6 Data analysis

After the data were gathered from the various qualitative methods, I began my data analysis phase. The data analysis will be described here based on the different types that I employed. For the face-to-face interviews I recorded with a digital audio recorder, I transcribed all the recordings myself by using the application, oTrancribe via oTranscribe.com. It is a free web application that could assist in transcribing recorded interviews. The application is very useful as it allowed me to pause, rewind and fast-forward the recording with available shortcuts, and it is also convenient to transcribers as switching between media files to listen to the recorded interviews and Microsoft Word document to transcribe is not necessary due to its built-in feature which enables multitasking by simultaneously listening and typing at the same time. After the data were transcribed, since the interviewees are Malaysians and bilinguals (Malay and English languages), as a communicative strategy, they often code-switch during the interviews. I also translated those parts of the data in the Malay language myself, which are included as part of the finding chapters in the thesis.

I then gathered the transcribed interviews and fieldwork notes to start the data analysis process. I read the transcriptions and my notes several times to formulate my overall understanding regarding the data. When it comes to analysis, I was considering both electronic and manual coding for my data. Initially, I used NVivo Software to categorise and analyse my data. However, due to practical reasons (not enough storage and the software crashed several times, which resulted in lost analysed data), I decided to do the coding manually. However, I used NVivo to organise my data as well as categorising my data in the early stage of the data analysis. According to Basit (2003, p. 143), as cited in Saldana (2016), when deciding between coding electronically or manually, "the choice will be dependent on the size of the project, the funds and time available, and the inclination and expertise of the researcher". Due to this and my personal experience, I coded the data using Microsoft Word. I created tables and categorised the data and codes relating to the data manually. With the guiding questions I had, I further adopted the guideline for manual coding by Saldana (2016) by creating columns and

[20] Appendix 1 (Participants' background information)

rows to analyse the participants' responses to the interview questions. Additionally, I used coloured pens and 'sticky note' papers to help me visualise the data at hand. From my experience, and this is supported by Saldana (2016, p. 30), the experience of working with something tangible and in an "old-school" manner allows for a degree of visualisation, which is not possible with a computer.

Next, I will discuss the analysis of the Facebook data. It is easy to be overwhelmed with the amount of data available from this medium. From the initial introduction section, profile photos, wall posts by the users (which include shared posts), wall or tagged posts by friends, photos, as initially mentioned, the information is abundant! Therefore, with the informed theoretical framework and literature review, I decided I would only analyse the posts made by the participants and would not analyse other information made available in the Facebook pages by others in the participants' social networks. Hence, tagged posts, photos or comments (even those made by the participants themselves) were not analysed.

It is also a concern surrounding the debate on social media regarding the data from this medium that, sometimes in terms of privacy, the boundaries could be blurred (Beye, 2010). It is also important to treat the data with respect to privacy and to acknowledge the experience of the users. Even for public accounts where the information is possible to be retrieved by anyone without asking for consent, it is also important to consider the experience of the users and whom they intended the message to be read by. With privacy issues in mind, I had decided to manually 'mine' the data very carefully. This allowed me to categorise the information, and also adhere carefully to ethical considerations and to avoid reading and evaluating other material, which was not written by my participants. To protect their privacy, I also decided to use pseudonyms for the purpose.

The timeline for which data to use in the study is also important. Upon consideration, as the study focuses on the lived experiences of the participants, I decided it would be useful to analyse what the participants posted starting from before their sojourn (varied) and until September 2016. However, the data from Facebook incorporated in the study would only be on the themes that initially categorised from the data from my interview with them in order to capture 'the unspoken' or what had happened but were not recalled during the interview sessions. As previously discussed, these data present what Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe as an extension to what the participants could recall from their memory. The data from Facebook was analysed and coded similarly to the narratives from the participants' interviews.

4.7 Ethical considerations: Online and offline

Realising the fascinating medium that computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides and the various possibilities of conducting research using CMC platforms, various disciplines have been exploring these platforms to conduct research studies from computer studies to other disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology and language. Ethical issues surrounding CMC research is one of the most debated issues considering the nature of the CMC platforms. Similarly, there are several issues that I needed to consider for the present study.

First, CMC platforms present a very unique setting that could be considered as both public and private. There have been debates on the presentation of content on CMC. Although the nature of CMC is that content presented by CMC users is considered public, considering accessibility of the information, there have been debates that this information should not be considered as public as the experience of the users sharing such information should be taken into consideration. For example, this issue provides a grey area to be tackled by researchers when dealing with CMC studies. Previous research studies, although failing to address the guidelines for researchers, agree that the vital factor in conducting studies in CMC, ethically, is determining whether the nature of the CMC is public or private (Eysenbach and Till, 2001; Sixsmith and Murray, 2001; Sudweeks and Rafaeli, 1995).

Although many researchers agree that CMC is characteristically public, Waskul (1996) suggests that the accessibility of the CMC should not be misused, but researchers should consider the experience of the CMC users more importantly. However, according to Jones (1994), protection of rights and interest do not apply if the subjects are unidentifiable since there will be no risk to the subjects in the research. In this light, for the present study, since Facebook is considered as private, in which adding an individual as a 'friend' in a person's network is subject to approval, appropriate measures have to be taken, as previously explained in the research procedure.

The second issue would be the extent of content made available based on the participants' privacy concerns. For some people, it is a venue for them to get to know new people and to socialise. By creating a profile, users could search for other profiles that fit their criteria; for example, by their location, interests or affiliations. Subject to the other users' privacy settings, the users could already access the other users' profiles and send them messages or write on their walls to create contact. However, for some it

is simply a place to maintain existing relationships and as a medium to keeping in touch with family and friends. How much do the users resort to Facebook in communicating with others? Who are the people that they have on their friends list? How much privacy setting do the users use on their Facebook? These are the questions that, in turn, would reflect their overall impression of their personal Facebook to them. Some users would only approve a request to become 'friends' if they have met and know the person offline. What they share could probably be more intimate things such as their location, feelings, daily activities and other personal information, which they may not be comfortable to share with random people online who they do not know personally.

On the other hand, there are Facebook users who do not treat their page quite as personally; at some point it is created just as a social justification and they would rarely check their account. However, positively, by sharing more details, a person would appear much more approachable, legitimate, and genuine in establishing rapport with another person whereby this information made available on Facebook is the basis of evaluation to creating new friendships, especially in the virtual world. Although this may sound unsafe, there are studies being conducted on the issues of self-disclosure on online medium despite the risks that may arise from such practice. In conclusion, establishing rapport and creating mutual understanding and respect between the participants and researcher is important for the research.

The third issue, relating to a previous point, would be the content to be analysed for the study. In this case, does the researcher and participant have the same understanding and awareness of the content to be consented and analysed? Is it mutually agreed by both participant and researcher? Would there be issues of mistrust in conducting studies in the online medium that is unlikely if it were to be conducted offline instead? Would conducting and using offline methods to measure online investigations suffice and justify online activities? What are the advantages and disadvantages these both bring? On the issue of mistrust, the participants who do not really trust the researcher may hide certain information that they are not comfortable sharing. At some point, this information could be useful for the researcher (or may not) as, with this particular issue, it is vital for the researcher to gain the participants' confidence and trust.

In accessing the content for the research from the participants' Facebook pages, there are several issues to be considered. Although clearly outlined in the plain language statement the content and which particular sections in the Facebook page will be studied, sometimes what is being documented by the participants themselves is forgotten and this could raise an issue of awareness of the content selected by the

researcher to be used for the study. For active users, the thought of going through what they have documented since they have registered an account could be dismissed as there are too many entries that require their consideration. Allowing an unfamiliar person access to personal wall posts might cause them anxiety. However, with this in mind, the participants are able to restrict the extent to which the researcher would be able to view the content of the Facebook which, potentially, might affect the findings of the research. Next, similar to offline studies, equal considerations should be applied to studies conducted online. The participants in CMC must be protected from harm[21]. The issues of confidentiality and participants' anonymity, as well as respecting the right to privacy, dignity and willingness to participate in research have to be addressed appropriately. Lawson (2004) stresses the protection of participant identity strategies; in doing so, all participant identifiers must be deleted from the work. Another issue that researcher should consider is obtaining consent from the participants of the research. Due to these reasons, by addressing these issues carefully in the plain language statement and consent form[22], participants are made aware of what is entailed upon their approval to become a participant in the research.

Finally, besides the guidelines provided about the research in the plain language statement, the researcher should also 'go the extra mile' in mitigating doubts on how the aftermath of the research, in particular how the research data would be handled, kept and presented. What may distress the participant most would probably be how the data would be used and who would have access to the data. In this case, I highlighted that besides myself, only my supervisors would have access to these data, and they would be kept securely in my computer in my office at St. Andrew's Building, School of Education at the University of Glasgow. When the data had been fully collected, they were also kept on my hard drive in a password-protected file.

In conclusion, ethical issues on online and offline research studies should not be taken lightly and researchers who plan to conduct studies in online platforms, especially, should be equipped with awareness of the delicate intricacies of what would be considered as public and private in consideration of the practice and understanding of the various online platforms to be pursued.

[21] Source: British Psychological Society (2015)
[22] refer to Appendix 8 and Appendix 9

4.8 My position as a researcher: A reflection

During the data collection process, I was aware of the power relations between the participants and myself as the researcher. As proposed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 37), it is important that the interviewer treats the interviews as "a completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners". They further describe the research interview between the researcher and the researched as a "specific professional conversation" where, in such contexts, issues of power asymmetry may arise. As I reflect, our similar identities as doctoral students during these sessions also prompted for bonding moments through shared identities and journeys.

> *Because I think the system here trained me to be a researcher. I believe you actually experience that yourself, actually, you know?*
>
> *(Lily, Female, SSH)*

Besides that, another issue that I noticed during the interviews with my participants was what I have termed "you know it is" moments, which frequently arose during the interview sessions with my fellow participants. My position as a researcher and PhD student served as a common identity that I share with my participants. The similar identity that I shared with many in terms of religion in some ways also gave me an advantage. When I was searching for possible participants, a few contacted me because they mentioned that "it is the nature of a Muslim to help another Muslim" while others "wanted to know more about the interviewing process" for another PhD student in a different field. As narrated in the Quran, Hadith 26 says:

> On the authority of Abu Huraira who said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Every small bone of everyone has upon it a charitable act for everyday upon which the sun rises. Bringing about justice between two is an act of charity. Helping a man get on his mount, lifting him onto it or helping him put his belongings onto it, is a charitable act. A good word is a charitable act. Every step you take toward the prayer is a charitable act. And removing a harmful thing from the path is a charitable act."
>
> (Recorded in al-Bukhari and Muslim[23])

The hadith, above, addresses the importance of helping one another in times of need, as God would record this as an act of piety and righteousness. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the interviews that I had with all my participants. When narrating their lived

[23] Source: https://hadithcommentary.com/nawawi/hadith26/

experiences in the UK, the majority of the participants also drew comparisons with experiences in their home country, which further evidenced the "here" and "there" experiences of the participants in the UK and Malaysia. These transnational lives, through their narratives, also further illustrate the participants' constant negotiations of identities in their everyday lives. When talking about their lives in Malaysia, especially families they had to leave behind during their sojourn, I could not help but notice that these issues touched them. It was apparent that for the majority of my participants, families play a large role in their lives and meant a lot to them. These delicate moments influenced me to be more reflexive during the interviews and, at times, we would take a break if I could sense my participants were feeling uncomfortable. Based on ethical imperatives, I also reminded them of their right to withdraw from the interviews if they wished to.

Next, I was also struck by gendered expectations that arose during my fieldwork process. This interview session is a "gendered context" similar to other interactions (Williams and Heikes, 1993) whether in same- or mixed-sex contexts. One male participant asked me how old I was, and whether I am married and why not. This presents the gender expectations that many individuals have in Malaysia. I must admit that as personal reflection, that was one of my concerns when I was back home, but I am not that concerned while I am in the UK. As I am also more concerned about my studies, and experiencing life in the UK, as well as the different social expectations and relations, this question heightened my position as being in *trans*. This encounter in itself suggests my change of habitus during my stint as a sojourner in the UK. Another interesting encounter was when I had an interview with a male participant in his office and one of his office-mates from Saudi Arabia (who is a Muslim) asked him, *"Who is this?"* My participant told him that I was his wife. I was surprised, but I understood his predicament as it was considered inappropriate for men and women to be alone together in a room as Muslims. This highlights the heterosexual family life in Malaysia, in which gender norms are also bounded by the Islamic religion. This religious norm that highlights the boundaries between men and women also, in that moment, anchored my identity as a Muslim woman, and across the distance from where I was more aware of this part of my identity, such experiences highlighted Islam as my *deen* (way of life) which transcends borders and time in these contemporary, transnational spaces.

In another instance, I was also struck by certain aspects that were expected to be unacceptable that were related to gender norms and expectations, religion, nationality and ethnic identity of a Malaysian. During one of my interviews, Azlan, one of my

participants, revealed a story that was candid and out of character as a Malaysian, he exclaimed, *"don't judge me!"*

From my experience in the fieldwork, especially in conducting interviews, as Aristotle (1994, p. 73) advocates, "We learn an art or craft doing the things that we shall have to do when we have learned it. (…) Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." As a novice researcher, research interviewing is a craft that individuals learn through 'doing' it. Although there are various references readily available to prepare researchers in the field; but, as mentioned by Aristotle earlier, we would not learn it until we are 'doing' the craft.

4.9 Participants' biographies

No.	Pseudonym	Field	Short biography
1	Sarah	STEM	She is close to her family and mentioned that her motivation to pursue her PhD is to fulfil her mother's dream for one of her children to have a PhD degree.
2	Hanah	SSH	She is married and her husband was with her during her sojourn. Works from home most of the time.
3	Raudah	SSH	She came from a close-knit family. Her sojourn was due to her profession as a tutor in a university in Malaysia. It is worth mentioning that she chose her profession so that she would be close to her family and relatives. She sees her sojourn as part of her 'job'.
4	Fira	STEM	She is married, and during my interview with her, her husband and child is in Malaysia.
5	Wahida	SSH	She visited the UK before with her family when she was younger, which encouraged her desire to live in the UK. Experienced a student exchange programme in Scotland when she was in high school and, later, returned for her postgraduate studies. Indicated a strong decision to work and live in the UK upon PhD completion.
6	Lily	SSH	She previously worked as a lecturer in a

			university in Malaysia. Married, and has her husband with her during her sojourn. Passionate with her profession as a lecturer, with a focus on teaching. She was motivated to pursue her PhD in the UK due to encouragement from her colleagues and co-nationals in the UK.
7	Siti	STEM	She is a passionate STEM researcher and comes from a close-knit family.
8	Maria	STEM	She is a passionate researcher, who also aspires to bring 'transformation' to the education system in Malaysia. Both parents hold postgraduate credentials.
9	Leah	SSH	She was sent to the UK under a tutorship programme. She already started her PhD programme in a university in Malaysia before being 'forced', as mentioned, to continue her PhD in the UK. She described herself as growing up in a modest family, living in a *kampung*.
10	Faezah	STEM	She described herself as someone who is an 'introvert'. She previously worked as a lecturer in a university in Malaysia before her sojourn. She lived with another female participant in the study.
11	Fina	SSH	She visited the UK before and 'fell in love' with the UK. Highly active in documenting her experiences in her social media platforms with her friends and family. She mentioned that during her formative years, she moved a lot with her family in Malaysia.
12	Lisa	SSH	She is highly mobile with varied experiences working in various EU countries before her sojourn in the UK.
13	Saleha	STEM	She previously worked as a doctor in Malaysia. A very passionate learner, with particular interest in languages. She is also accompanied by her husband and children

			during her sojourn.
14	Mazni	SSH	She previously did her undergraduate degree in the UK. Enjoys travelling. She pursues her PhD due to her to profession as a lecturer, as well as to fulfil her mother's wishes.
15	Kirin	SSH	A friendly bubbly person, and has a distinctive Malaysian northern dialect. Loves travelling and has a close-knit family. Active in social media.

Table 4.1 Female participants' biographies

No.	Pseudonym	Field	Short biography
1	Alif	SSH	He was previously a government officer in Malaysia before pursuing his doctoral degree in the UK. He is married, and has a wife and children with him here. He described himself as a 'city person' and adapts to changes quickly due to his background. Sees his sojourn as not only beneficial for him, but also an enriching experience for his family 'that you can't get elsewhere'.
2	Faliq	STEM	He previously received his undergraduate and Master degrees from a university in the United States. His job offer required him to have a doctoral degree. Married and has a wife and child in the UK.
3	Hamid	STEM	He was born and raised in a village in northern Malaysia. He is one of the few participants in the study who pursued his PhD after his undergraduate degree. He also previously completed his undergraduate in the UK.
4	Nasir	STEM	He was an engineer in Malaysia before his sojourn. He has his wife and family with him during his sojourn in the UK. He mentioned that he was motivated to pursue a doctoral degree because his wife is a lecturer. They planned to do their PhDs together.

5	Farid	STEM	He is the only participant in the study who is self-funded. He mentioned that he would only return to Malaysia after his retirement, and imagined himself in other countries after his studies.
6	Azlan	SSH	He was previously an English teacher, and he shows high investment in his English language learning, probably due to his identity as an English teacher. He is also fashionable, and mentioned that he could be 'himself' in the UK.
7	Darius	STEM	He previously worked as a lecturer. Passionate about his research, and highly active in Facebook. He used it as a 'journal' to record his thoughts, and findings of his research.
8	Fahmi	STEM	He previously worked in the industry (STEM), and left the profession to pursue his dream to become a lecturer, with the perks of spending more time with his family.
9	Lee	STEM	He mentioned that he was funded for his undergraduate degree by his parents in the UK, due to better education outside Malaysia. His siblings studied abroad as well.
10	Qayum	STEM	He is chatty and extremely passionate about his research. Demonstrated his investment in English Language. The first in his family and village in Malaysia, as he mentioned, to pursue a degree abroad. Previously did his Master's degree abroad.
11	Ahmad	STEM	He is chatty and friendly. Married, and has his wife and children in the UK with him. The only participant in my study who loves the weather in Scotland!
12	Walid	STEM	He aspires to work in the UK or other EU countries after his PhD degree. Lived alone.

Table 4.2 Male participants' biographies

4.10 Conclusion to the Chapter

As presented in the Chapter, based on the theoretical framework of the research, which investigated the lived experiences of international doctoral students from Malaysia in the UK, by using Bourdieu's (1986, 1992) theoretical lens, namely capital, habitus and field, as well as transnationalism under globalisation influences (Vertovec, 2009), an interpretivist, qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the phenomenon. I approached the research study with a naturalistic and emergent design, which incorporated multiple qualitative methods, which include semi-structured interviews, Facebook status updates, follow-up email questions, as well as field-work notes. These multiple methods were used to help me investigate the different emerging issues discussed by the participants and as a way to triangulate the data. Besides the methodological approach of the research, I also discussed other issues such as the credibility and quality of the data, as well as my position as a researcher. The chapter also includes the snapshots of the participants' biographies to offer background information regarding the interviewees. To wrap up, I reflect my experience as a researcher during my fieldwork period. As stressed by Aristotle (1977), by 'doing' something one would learn the craft they wish to have. In my experience of 'doing' research I see it as a way to acquire the craft as a researcher.

Chapter 5

Before Their Journey: motivations for, and imaginations of, their future sojourn in the UK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the participants' motivations for sojourning in the UK outside their home country. In an increasingly globalised world, the participants' initial reasons for undertaking PhD degrees will give insights into how they planned to experience and make use of their time during their sojourn. These discourses, articulated by the participants during the interviews, are important in terms of analysing their personal motivations, intentions and imaginations concerning the potential benefit that having a PhD degree would bring into their lives. These motivations could be in terms of instrumental advantages, such as job opportunities or requirements, or for a range of more seemingly individual or 'personal' reasons. When discussing the participants' personal motivations for doctoral degrees, I was struck by the interconnection between these motivations and multidimensional aspects of their identities as employers, national citizens, religious observers, daughters, sons, mothers and fathers, hence showing that these relational social identities and roles play a central role in participants' everyday lives. This suggests that the role of pursuing education, according to Waters (2005) and Huang and Yeoh, (2005), especially abroad, is not simply individual or 'personal', it is also a socially constituted dynamic which is aimed at benefiting both themselves and others significant in their lives transnationally by improving their social, cultural and symbolic capital through pursuing education abroad.

5.2 Studying Abroad: the desire to acquire formal and informal knowledge

The national funding bodies (F1 and F2) sponsored the majority of the participants (15/27) in the present study[24]. The participants who were funded by F1 mostly previously worked at various HEIs in Malaysia or other government institutions, or received funding under the lecturer's scheme by the HE institutions in Malaysia. These participants were required to serve the government based on their scholarship agreements upon completion of their doctoral degrees. Meanwhile, participants who received a scholarship from F2 were not attached to any institutions, but they were required to return upon completion as well. For the participants who were funded by

[24] See Appendix 2

the university and self-funded, they were not attached to any institutions or government bodies. This overview representation of the participants' funding bodies and overall descriptions of their scholarships' agreements is vital to give an overall picture of the participants' backgrounds and their future pathways [25] that could contribute to their lived experiences that are investigated in this thesis.

5.2.1 Gaining knowledge

First, the participants' desire for study abroad is due to formal and informal knowledge. One form of cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms (see chapter 2) is the knowledge of the field that the participants acquire during their sojourn abroad. What the participants have learnt directly and indirectly during their time abroad can be seen as giving them an advantage in their various employments. Other benefits for sojourning in acquiring this particular form of capital include exposure to the English language as the main language of use during their sojourn which, from the participants' narratives, was deemed to be valuable in their workplaces in their home country, as it is considered as a global language in transnational labour markets (Crystal, 2003; Neeley, 2013). In today's challenging world, we could see how the job market is becoming increasingly more competitive. To stand out in the crowd, a neoliberal imperative encourages the individual to have an 'edge' that will separate him or her from the rest, whether it be an additional qualification, for example a PhD, or other advantages. This could be illustrated in my participants' case from the myriad potential career pathways they described.

The majority of the participants (15/27) who were sponsored by F1 previously worked or would work upon return in various HEIs in Malaysia. These individuals are required to have a PhD to be a fully-fledged lecturer in these institutions. Ahmad regarded his identity as 'an instructor' before getting a PhD:

> Because back in Malaysia I've been working as an academician... so, my position is as a lecturer. So, but I always consider myself as just an instructor. To many it's a different thing - it's just the same thing, but to me I'm not there yet to declare myself as a lecturer.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM, middle class)

Thus, although he was appointed as a lecturer, without a doctoral degree he could not fully embrace his identity as a lecturer. This is a clear example of Ahmad noting the

[25] See Appendix 2

importance of the qualification of the doctorate as cultural capital he needs to gain, in order to gain the title of lecturer - a status perceived by both himself and others as holding higher status, even though the work would essentially be the same. It is implied, here, that the knowledge/experience generated by PhD study is of secondary value to simply obtaining the qualification.

For another participant, Hanah, her sojourn was also encouraged by the ever-demanding qualification needs to become a lecturer in Malaysia, which is her long life dream:

> I think I have set to join academia... since degree. So, which means, after my degree, I know that I need to further my Master's because during that time they're saying that if you want to join the academia you need to have at least a Master's degree. So, that is what I do. Then, after I finished my Master's degree, they're saying that, you know, the regulations changed and they're saying that Master's degree not really, you know, not really look appealing already, they're saying that you need to have a PhD and luckily during that time they offer the fellowship.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH, middle class)

In this era of globalisation, as Hanah mentioned, the regulations for educators in various HEIs in Malaysia (and globally) is ever changing and becoming more competitive (Marginson, 2007). To compete in academic employment today, she had to upgrade herself and her doctoral degree would be a ticket for her to stand out in the crowd in the academic world. The motivation seems purely to do with the qualification and the recognition/status of a doctoral degree. Also, a few participants who were still undergoing their PhDs talked about their anxiety of meeting the publications standard and requirement upon their return- which is part and parcel of academia.

Besides the importance of having a PhD to advance in academia, other participants also mentioned the importance of a doctoral degree in their professions. Similarly, Lily further elaborated the position as a 'lecturer' and what it meant to her:

> Actually as a lecturer, I think everybody should have a PhD, but in [Anonymised University], they still accept lecturers who have Master's, who are Master's holders, they still can work as a lecturer… Not tutor. However, even though we hold the status of lecturer in [Anonymised University] but I think everybody in [Anonymised University] should have the responsibility to improve their qualification because I think PhD (…) I mean everybody should have a PhD as a

> lecturer, as an academician, we should have the PhD as a starting point to be active in research. Because I think PhD and Master is very, very different in terms of doing research and even though it's different with Master by research and therefore by having the PhD, it will give us the starting point, it will give us the motivation to be active in research in future.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH, middle class)

What Lily shared suggests that she perceived having a PhD gives individuals in academia the credibility and official legitimacy to conduct research projects and disregard that a Master's degree by research mode is sufficient. She also felt that by having a PhD, this would give her the motivation and autonomy to be active in research. This is slightly different to Ahmad - Lily seems motivated also by gaining the research experience/knowledge gained by PhD study, which will give her the confidence to be research-active in the future. This is also cultural capital but it is the capital of knowledge/experience rather than simply the qualification that seems important to her. Furthermore, according to Lily, it is perceived that identity as a PhD-holder is a synonym to doing research, seen as the main responsibility in academia. According to Sutherland (2017), one of the important factors for success relies on the research activities an academic is involved in.

For Alif who has worked for the government for a number of years, a PhD is considered as 'the next thing' to advance in his career.

> Emm… I'm an administrator... so the competition is quite intense in the government, so being an administrator you need to make sure that you have skills that are valuable to the government. Because research skills... we need more researchers in the government that possess research skills, so that we are able to - the government are able to conduct more research in the government to improve the system - so that's why I think this research skills is important to me as an administrator.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH, middle class)

As narrated by Alif, although he already had a comfortable job with the government, there was a need to keep updating his skills to ensure that he is valuable to his employers. Research skills to improve the system are particularly prized in his employment and pursuing a PhD seemed a natural path for him to advance his career. In this way we can see the influence on Alif's thinking of a neoliberal discourse of the

need for constant 'self-improvement' to be successful in academia – similar to that found by Archer (2008) in relation to younger academics in the UK.
Similarly, Wahida, who worked in the banking industry, echoed Alif's sentiment:

> Well to be honest with you, when I was working in a bank, I learnt a lot about reality. I learnt a lot about life, and also competition. So, when I was working in a bank, I look around me and I say to myself - how could I be different from the rest? How I could I get noticed? Because it's not easy to be noticed you know, when you are out there. It's a rat race - you know, it's the reality. It's no longer college (laughs). So - and then I noticed a few of my colleagues at the bank, they had Master's with them... and I see how they think, how they work - it's very different from the degree holders. And then after two years of brushing myself at the bank, I came to the conclusion that I think a Master's will bring me higher, *inshaa Allah*[26] in my career. When I wanted to do a Master's, it was actually more to further enhance my career - so, that was the reason. And also to get the competitive edge because you have an extra qualification.
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH, middle class)

Wahida's previous experience working in the banking field made her notice the distinction between her colleagues with postgraduate qualifications in terms of 'the way they think and work'. For Wahida, having a postgraduate degree affected her colleagues' habitus in notable ways. These distinctions were evidently valuable in the field she was in and she felt that postgraduate qualifications would give her the 'edge' she needed to advance her career in today's competitive world.

In contrast, Faliq, who was in STEM, sought for employment after his Master's degree and discovered the harsh reality of the present situation in Malaysia.

> *Bile habis master, ingat masa saya dah tak nak kerja, dah* stop [After I completed my Master's degree, I thought I'm going to stop learning]--- *tapi ada satu jawatan ni-- die nak* research scholar, *die nak ada* title PhD [but there is this one position that requires a PhD title to become a research scholar]. So, I went to the interview - I thought they have like a programme or something] *pastu die kate die takde bagi dah jawatan tu* to master--- tapi die nak ada fellowship la untuk sambung PhD [and I was told that I need a PhD, and there is a fellowship to pursue a PhD - you need to have a PhD first and then we're

[26] Inshaa Allah is an Arabic phrase, which means if Allah wills it. Source: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/

> gonna appoint you with that title *kan*. Then they decide], *terpaksa jugak lah buat PhD sebab* job *tak banyak dengan bidang saye.. pastu die kata dalam masa 6 bulan, kena cepat-cepat cari PhD and then sambung* [I have to do a PhD because there are not much job opportunities in my field. So, within six months, I had to find a place to do pursue a PhD].
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM, middle class)

Desirable employment in his field appeared to be scarce and Faliq was required to pursue his PhD as a condition for his employment, although he did not intend to do so as he had spent many years previously in the United States for his Bachelor's and Master's degrees; however, in his case, pursuing a PhD is unavoidable for his chosen employment. For another participant, Hamid, besides his personal motivations, discussed earlier, he also wanted to acquire skills that are limited in Malaysia. 'Giving back' to the society/home country appeared to be a recurrent theme throughout the majority of the participants' narratives, which echoes Smith (2007). As discussed in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.1), Smith notes that international students seek for specific training that would benefit their home country. This could be exemplified through Hamid and Nasir's narratives below.

> I think I just focus on my PhD. *Sebab* [Because] I try to work on something that is not familiar in Malaysia. So, I try to find a skill that - *macam kat Malaysia takde… and I ade... kat sini ade* [there is no expert in Malaysia... and I have it].
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM, working class)

Hamid was very passionate about his research project, as he further elaborated:

> I think my project is quite interesting. So, I collaborate with [various people] and also software and all those things. *I tak tau la kat Malaysia tapi I tau kat Malaysia bile buat project, macam* [I do not know about the projects in Malaysia, but I know, like] ...*tapi* [but] I found it interesting... a big project… well-funded… although I'm funded by F2. So, I manage to go into that group and learn from the people how to manage the project and then how to collaborate with people, and I also learn a lot of skills, which is still unavailable in Malaysia. So, I'm trying to get something that is not available in Malaysia. And then because UK recognition.
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM, working class)

The opportunity to collaborate with an external company for a big project, for Hamid, was an invaluable experience. This is also an example of commercialising projects through collaborations, much more often narrated by participants in STEM fields. Besides the skills that he acquired throughout, he also had the chance to extend his networks with people in various fields, as he revealed, which indicated social capital gains through the project he was involved in. This prospect had also indirectly increased his social capital by working with these professionals. 'UK recognition', according to Hamid, is also important as a symbolic status of a leading 'world class' education provider. Furthermore, this also highlights the symbolic status and dominance of UK HEIs post colonialism context, beyond its geographical borders (John, 1996).

For another participant, Nasir, who worked in an environmental consultancy firm, besides the advantage of an overseas postgraduate qualification, his sojourn was also motivated due to his profession and field, which required him to seek expertise from his current supervisor.

> And ah - with - I mean at that time I couldn't find any expertise in this area - back in Malaysia because the level of awareness - people take this issue for granted. They don't really like think that's - this fire safety issue is very important. But here in western world, specifically in Europe, they think this issue is very important, so they have many specialist - so that's why.
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM, middle class)

He also elaborated the importance of his field, which he felt did not receive much attention in his home country and taken lightly in Malaysia compared to European countries. Thus, he felt that he could offer a contribution to the society back home through his research in fire safety.

5.2.2 Symbolic capital of UK HEIs

Symbolic capital of the UK HE institutions as 'world-class' education providers was articulated by the participants in their discourses of their motivation for sojourn. As noted in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.2), according to Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic capital refers to (socially constructed) forms of recognition, prestige and honour (Bourdieu, 1986). In this instance, the symbolic capital envisaged by participants related to the UK institutions' reputation as world class education providers. The quality that these HE institutions provide is recognised worldwide, and the UK universities of choice were regarded for having the *je ne sais quoi* besides the reputation that they behold which,

according to Amsler and Bolsmann, the perceived 'world-classness' and universities ranking (2012, p. 284) are deeply historical.

> Actually when I looked for a university, F1 they asked us to look for top 200 universities. So that's one of the requirements that I have to follow, so when I started to look for a university…
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM, middle class)

> (…) the institute of medical sciences is among the top cardio vascular centres in the UK.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM, middle class)

> Because the UK is like a melting pot of education, so it's the best. I believe that the education system is best compared to where I come from. So, I like to take the opportunity to come and study here. Because, like, me, I'm under F2, so they already have a list of universities that I can apply to, and S1 is in the top 200 universities. It's really good.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH, middle class)

Although decades had passed since Malaysia was colonised by the British, this historical event is still articulated by many of the participants and brought a 'symbolic' meaning to their motivation for pursuing their doctoral degrees from the UK.

> I think we are exposed to the image of the UK - we can see it like this first. We had been colonised by the UK for quite some time - long time ago. So, and also the British actually... very good in education... even in Malaysia, we have been influenced largely by the UK in terms of education... and actually, not only Chinese in Malaysia, I can say that because my father is from China, which means that the Chinese from China, they actually think that the UK is the hub of education.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH, middle class)

> (...) I think the UK has a very -um - I mean the education is very well-known all over the world and they have a reputation in Malaysia as a world class education provider... and also maybe because Malaysia was colonised by the British before... so we tend to look up to them... so these are parts of the motivations... what shapes my thinking, my perception towards the UK education.

(Wahida, Female, SSH, middle class)

Being colonised in the past had resulted in an ingrained perception of the UK status – the continued reverence for UK academic 'excellence' is arguably connected to this 'colonial legacy' in the postcolonial era (see Madge et al., 2009). Because of the history and the education system during this time, the 'symbolic' status of the UK as the best education provider was passed down from one generation to the next. Another important aspect of the participants' choosing the UK as their destination to pursue their education is the familiarity due to presumably post-colonial issues such as the language and education system.

> (…) because our system is based exactly following the UK system.
>
> (Farid, Male, STEM, middle class)

> Looking at the UK because we are from Malaysia, a Commonwealth country - so, we are looking at the UK in way that as a big brother or role model for Malaysia, and of course during that time possibly Malaysian will come to the UK to study over here - because all the system mostly the basic of the system in Malaysia is using the UK system, so I'm not expecting that much of difference - I think that I can adapt quite well.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, SSH, middle class)

Another important discourse would be social capital they will acquire through connections with important academics in their respective fields. It is widely reported in studies of international students in UK HEIs that one of the major motivations for pursuing a degree overseas is due to aspiration for social capital. In the context of international PhD students, the majority of the participants indicated that one of the important motivations for their sojourn in the UK, or deciding on a particular university, was due to the chance to be able to work with 'someone who has a name' in their desired field:

> I was given, based on the lecturer's scheme, I need to study on the [Anonymised field] subject, so I start to focus on the worldwide organisation for the subject. And I found the Vice President for that association is working here as a lecturer. Okay, so I contact him and also I contact another lecturer in Australia. Both have given good feedback, but since the lecturer here is working as a Vice President, so I chose to come here. It's more because of the expertise of my supervisor rather than other factors. Based on my sponsorship scheme, they need

> me to focus on this discipline. So, I should have more expertise and skill in that area. But I don't mind it because after this I will work as a lecturer then I need to teach all subjects. So, I have the expertise and skill in another discipline.
>
> (Fahmi, Male, STEM, middle class)

As we can see, the standing/connections of Fahmi's supervisor in a recognised academic social network was the key motivation for his choice. Besides the symbolic reputation of UK HEIs, the appeal of a similar education system, and social capital through connections to important academics, a few participants also stressed the appeal of the expected time to complete their programmes. As the majority of the participants were funded, they were confronted with a time constraint to finish their studies. Being in the UK, the participants had to think about their living expenses, especially for those who had their family and children with them during their sojourn.

> So - *macam mana saye decide UK - sebab 3 tahun kan* [how I decide UK—because of three years, right?] *Boleh habis dalam 3-4 tahun - berbanding macam* US - at least 5-6 tahun [It is possible to complete within 3-4 years compared to the US—at least 5-6 years].
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM, middle class)

Besides the advantages in terms of the reputation of UK HEIs and their academics, time is also one of the important factors for pursuing their PhDs in the UK. At first glance, this seems simply a practical motivation. However, the motivation is deeper - a motivation to gain cultural capital in a shorter amount of time for the benefits it will accrue afterwards. For Faliq, imagining that it was possible for him to complete his studies in the UK within a lesser time compared to the US motivated him to choose the UK instead. It was a recurrent theme in the data for the UK to be compared to the US in terms of a destination for sojourn. Similarly, another participant, Azlan, also compared and imagined how his experience would be if he were to pursue his doctoral degree in the US instead of the UK, albeit for a different reason:

> As a student, as a PhD candidate, yeah… I have a dilemma as well… before I came here. And I think that it's good actually we share about this as well. Some people might think why don't you choose the USA compared to UK, you know, back to your first question just now. Ah, I find that it's actually hard to answer, but I have my personal perspectives about that, actually. If you go to US… people say that you're going to get more information, you're going to be more knowledgeable… people say that actually, straight to my face, and people say

> that because why? They say that because we go for classes and everything and after that they're going to ask you to prepare your project. But here, from day one, so they will ask you to prepare your research and then you have to work on your own. So, that's why I said to them, even though I don't have classes here in the UK based on the system, but I believe that I'm here, start from day one as a researcher. But you, if you go the US, you're actually a student, and some more actually you have to complete the what we call that the coursework for the first two years and then after that for the next two years…
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

When discussing about his choice to pursue his studies in the UK, besides the concern of completing his studies within three to four years, another reason was that Azlan embraced the identity as a researcher from the moment he started his programme in the UK. He compared the studentship tenure if he were to study in the US. Hence, he is not simply motivated by acquiring cultural capital in the future in a shorter amount of time, he is also motivated by the desire to gain experience as a solo researcher from an earlier period and perhaps also the autonomy/higher status of being perceived as a researcher rather than 'just' a student.

In comparison with previous narratives, Mazni's predicament was an exception as it was due to recognition of her education pathway with the institutions in Malaysia.

> So I tried last time *kat* [I was at] Uni of P, so they allow to go for PhD *kalau I buat* Master [if I do my Master], I *akan repeat again apa yang I dah belajar masa I kat* UK [When I tried in Uni of P, they allow me to go for PhD if I do my Master, I will repeat again what I studied when I was in the UK]. Exactly *semua benda yang sama je tapi* because *the title is [Anonymised degree],* my funder did not allow. We have complete [degree] because that's the criteria for F2. Most of my friends yang work in Engineering don't have that problem. But if you work in academic, you *kena amik* [have to do] master or go for PhD. *Tapi most of them yang study dekat UK akan* [But most of them who studied in the UK will] jump back to PhD in UK *lah. Sebab tu nak tak nak kena PhD dekat UK* [That is why I have to do my Phd in the UK].
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM, middle class)

In Mazni's unique case, since she is in academia, she is faced with a difficult position whereby her prerequisite degree is only transferrable if she continued her doctoral degree in the UK where she acquired her previous degree, unlike her friends who

studied in the same field, but are working in industry. This complicated nature in recognising the award, her intention to stay in academia, as well as her desire to further develop her 'capital' had led to her sojourn in the UK again for her doctoral degree. In this example, it could be suggested that, in certain cases, investment in a UK degree could be detrimental, where inequalities exist in opportunities in different spaces for the sojourners upon their return. Of all the participants in the study, Mazni is the only person who was confronted with such a predicament. This suggests the issue of transferability of the degree between the home and host country and its universal acceptance.

The majority of the participants, particularly those in STEM fields described being motivated by the connections (and thus social capital) that they will acquire. This could be through connections with important academics (Guth and Gill, 2008). The majority of the participants who were previously academics or received scholarships from lecturers' schemes from various HEIs in Malaysia quoted that one of their main purposes for their sojourn would be attaining doctoral degrees from a university in the UK, due to the perceived value of supervision from UK-based experts in their various fields. Besides that, for participants in STEM fields, a few quoted that their experience working in various collaborations with external companies in relation to their fields of study were invaluable.

For the majority of students in STEM fields, the technology and facilities provided in HEIs in the UK are considered as an important factor when considering pursuing their PhDs. The accessibility of materials and equipment, which could help their research projects, are essential to consider. When the participants were racing against time and funding, as mentioned by Sarah in her interview, the UK was an obvious choice:

> I expect university in the UK have much better facilities for me because I'm doing labwork based... so when I try to order solvent or instrument, it's faster compared to Malaysia because in Malaysia it will take a month or a few months... even the solvent! The simplest thing that we need to have, it will take a month in Malaysia... but here, it's just a few days... sometimes in the same week I can get that thing.
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM, middle class)

> I believe that education in the UK is different from Malaysia. And I think I can finish my PhD within three years if I do it here compared to Malaysia because we have all this expertise, scientists and the technologies and he because I'm doing

> lab-based work, so all the agents, chemicals that we ordered they can arrive between two or three working days. Not like in Malaysia, we have to wait for maybe two or three months or weeks before the agents come…
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM, working class)

The themes of finishing on time due to funding issues and on accessibility of resources was also articulated more by the participants in STEM fields compared to participants in SSH. Others were motivated by their imaginings of added value that UK research culture would be able to offer, and how it would contrast with Malaysia and elsewhere. Although, as I have narrated previously, the similarity of the UK and Malaysian education system was a motivation for the majority of the participants' sojourn in the UK, several students also shared how the experience that they gained in the UK is distinct and valuable. Hanah was one of the participants who articulated what she intended to gain from experiencing research in the UK.

> I hope - actually I will like to learn something that - what I am able... not really saying that unable to learn in Malaysia - maybe we can't be exposed that way. So, I will like to learn the way of doing research in the UK. They have a totally different approach... in doing research in the UK than in Malaysia. So, that's what motivate (sic) me because - um - I'm in the academic field. So, no matter how - I need to be involved in research. So, I hope to actually take this opportunity doing my PhD to get exposed... um - not really the way of doing research... because I think different cultures and different countries, they have their style in doing research. So, mainly to expose me to the way of - patterns of different approaches in doing research. Just to enhance my knowledge - something like that - to gain experience.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH, middle class)

Hanah's narration illustrated, in some ways, her imaginings of how doing a PhD in the UK would enrich her research skills. She believed that 'cultures from different countries' would augment her knowledge—which suggests an academic version of 'diversity capital', where she would not only be able to have the value of being seen as a more 'cosmopolitan' individual, but also cosmopolitan in doing and thinking about research. This extended the cosmopolitanism aspect not only in terms of interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds but, also, to the individuals' involvement with academia and as academics. Hence, capital as in Bourdieu's term is transferrable in not only the types of capital, but also in *trans* to benefit knowledge as

academics - bridging western and eastern ‘ways of thinking’ in academia. This is further demonstrated later in the thesis (see Section 7.2).

In contrast, Siti’s sojourn was motivated by the unpleasant anecdotes she heard from her friends of their experience doing research studies in Malaysia.

> I didn't want to do a Master's in Malaysia because I know research for my field in Malaysia is not conducive. *Dia boleh* [It can] be stretched to… a normal research can stretch up to 3-4 years… *padahal* [eventhough] Master's level. So, I didn't want that. I think because the lack of materials…
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM, middle class)

> The most certain thing when I decide to study overseas is lots of people say that in, umm, in technology or sciences, Malaysia is much way too far behind rather than a European country. So, the UK is one of the most of... one of the most developed countries in the world, so, yeah I have a lot of expectations in terms of technology. It's really, really an honour because being here doing experiments that I can't be doing in Malaysia like the instruments cost lots of million dollars, million pounds, and being able to be trained with all the expertise in here is really, really good. Ah, most of my… I would say most of my expectations in terms of the technology, the expertise really being like achieved already. It's really good.
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM, middle class)

The same view on doing postgraduate studies in Malaysia was also mentioned by other students in STEM fields more than in Social and Human Sciences. Siti, besides Lee and Farid, were the only participants who were financially supported by their parents either during Master’s degree (for Siti), Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees for Lee and PhD degree for Farid. Back to Siti, she later received sponsorship to continue her PhD by F1 after completing her Master’s degree. Although her narrative above was about her pursuit for a Master’s degree abroad, this seemed to be the main reason why most participants in the STEM field decided to pursue their postgraduate degrees abroad, and in the UK specifically where time and resources are the concerns. Maria also stressed her expectations of advanced technology in the UK HEIs which is, again, a reoccurring discourse of the quality of western universities. This is partly symbolic prestige as a legacy of the colonial era, as well as the contemporary material capital of western universities.

5.2.3 The ‘tourist gaze’

Another attraction for pursuing international education is the participants’ imagined mobility and ‘tourist gaze’. Studying abroad also comes with the appeal to international students as a tourist destination. The term ‘tourist gaze’, coined by Urry (1990), suggests experiencing other cultures, environments and getting to know people with pleasurable anticipation during this social experience. The majority of the participants ‘exoticised’ the West and articulated the perceived beauty of the UK especially the northern parts of the UK, especially in terms of its nature. While during the interviews many admitted that they had not had the chance to explore extensively, they were, however, able to name a few famous tourist destinations as being portrayed in the media. This shows the power of media and how the media consumptions could affect not only participants, but also others in terms of attracting international students to the UK.

> What motivates me to study? First… it’s a foreign land (laughs). Second, because I was influenced by a Malay drama that I watched during my primary school… which is *‘Cinta Antara Benua’* (laughs).
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH, middle class)

The narrative above, amongst others, was one of the examples of how ‘a foreign land’ is considered as exotic and romanticised through the media (Green and Bringle, 2015). Even before their sojourn, the participants imagine the exquisite lives that they would live through representation in the media.

For Wahida who came from a middle class family and the chance to visit the UK when she was younger, the early exposure had encouraged her to seek for opportunities to visit the UK again.

> When I was 15 years old, I went to London - for a family holiday… so, I really liked it - you know, UK. I mean... I didn't know about Scotland... at that time of course...I was just in London for a family holiday... And I said to myself that I really wanted to study in the UK one day. So - *Alhamdulillah* (praise to God).... after two years, I was 15 at that time, Form 3, so, after I completed my Form 5, I came here for a student exchange programme. So, I was here when I was 17 years old in [Anonymised city].
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH, middle class)

Wahida's family holiday a turning point and marker for studying and living in the UK. After her positive experience in her student exchange programme, she decided to find other opportunities to visit the UK again. It could be suggested that she developed her 'tourist gaze' for the UK during her initial holiday with her family along with her positive experience encountered during her exchange student programme.

In another example, Ahmad, who also had brothers who previously studied abroad when he was younger and shared their adventures studying abroad, saw this as an opportunity to experience on his own.

> We are not a wealthy family, so it's just simply like my case. I'm only here because of I have the scholarship, so we cannot afford - my family cannot afford to be - to have a luxury vacation to come to a European country like this.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM, working class)

> It's just a matter of basically I want to I can now do my PhD. And think about what I wanna do, which is change management and look at the places that we like going to which is mainly Scotland. Because when I was younger, I forgot to tell you that. My dad and my family, except for me because I was in [Anonymised school], they used to live in [Anonymised city] because my dad studied in [Anonymised city]. … to do his Master's there. So I always wanted to go back to Scotland, and my husband's best friend is also here in Scotland. He is Scottish and he is here in [Anonymised city]. So it was a toss between [Anonymised city] and [Anonymised city]... So we looked at, well… [Anonymised city] was in it as well but it's too cold.
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH, middle class)

According to Ahmad, who came from a middle class family, although his family was comfortable, due to the high UK exchange rate and currency, it had not been possible for his family to visit European countries earlier. By choosing to pursue his PhD and with scholarship he received, he was able to realise his dreams to have a 'luxury vacation' as he mentioned. This showed the 'tourism' outlook of study abroad as an appeal, and how such opportunities gave individuals from the working class the opportunity to explore the UK.

> *Ahh sebab S2 cantik*. [Ahh because S2 is beautiful] (laughs)
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM, working class)

> But other than that, I guess, just like what I mentioned before - experience overseas - get to know people from different culture, environment - that's a good experience. And of course, *melancong lah kut* [sight-seeing maybe]. (laughs)
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM, middle class)

> (…) because I think the reason is I just like Scotland, the nature and all that. I applied to many universities in Scotland and I got into S1 (…) I've been to the UK before, I was in London, but I think the cost of living is very so S1 might be the best choice. Thinking that before I came here I thought that it is very far from any other places. So, if I stay here I can really concentrate on my study, hopefully (laughs)
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH, middle class)

A few also articulated that they purposely chose the north of the UK as their academic destination due to its tourism qualities as well as being less costly in terms of living expenses during their stay. This is to ensure that they were able to live and finance their activities comfortably. In contrast, it is widely reported in the literature on international students pursuing undergraduate degrees that one of the main reasons for studying abroad is to socialise with the local community, in other words to acquire cultural capital. To further illustrate this issue, the participants will further discuss in the following chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) how it touched the participants' lived experiences during their sojourn.

Some participants also indicated that they not only want official qualifications but, also, the more nebulous 'informal' capital of habitus transformation, which comes from travelling abroad. This could be suggested as anticipated 'change of self' by travel according to transnational theory.

5.3 Studying Abroad: for the benefit of self and/or others

Besides the personal reasons for various forms of informal and formal knowledge acquired through their study abroad, other reasons for study abroad also include the discourse on neoliberalism benefits for 'improvement of the self'. People often focused on individual benefits when discussing this; however, the majority of the participants often referred to concerns for others, especially their family. According to Croll (2004), family members are strong motivators to individuals' educational endeavours. This is also echoed in my study where parents, especially mothers, and the participants'

'significant others' are the individuals who motivated the participants to pursue their educational journey. These experiences are also to a greater or lesser extent gendered according to the participants.

Besides the participants' intentions for accumulation of various forms of capital, it was also apparent that the motivation to pursue their PhDs, or at least their sojourn, was relational, driven by others significant in their lives such as family members and other authoritative figures such as employers (Brooks and Water, 2010).

5.3.1 Family

First, I will be presenting the data concerning ways in which family is an influence for the married participants to pursue their PhDs in the UK. Another aspect that could motivate the participants' sojourn was their marital status. The table below represents the participants' status during the interviews being conducted.

Relationship status		
Gender	Married	Single
Male	6	6
Female	6	9
Total	12	15

Figure 5.1 Participants according to their relationship statuses

Although initially I did not intend to look into the participants' relationship status in relation to their motivation for sojourning in the UK for their PhDs, the themes that emerged from the interviews revealed that having families could be a motivation for a few of the participants. From the participants' narratives, the family's influence seemed to be a dominant discourse as motivation for UK sojourn for their doctoral degrees. This can be discussed based on the participants' relationship status. For the participants who are single (at the time the interviews were conducted), doing what your parents encouraged you to do is imperative. As mentioned before, dispositions and attitudes towards the status and academic capital of UK HEIs are intergenerational.

For Hanah, her motivation to pursue her PhD in the UK was encouraged by her family, due to the symbolic status of 'the UK' as an institution.

> Okay… um… I will talk in general… in the UK… for Chinese family... they will always say that - go further study to England… the UK is synonymous with

> England in Chinese belief, values that kind of thing. So, usually when you go to further study, they will say 'go to England, go to England…'. So, it's kind of perception and preferences from the family, you know?
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH, middle class)

> (…) because mostly my parents think that the education outside Malaysia is better. Somehow they sent all my siblings, including me out of Malaysia to study and both siblings my brother and sister were studying in the United States, and I'm not a big fan of the US, so I chose the United Kingdom.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM, middle class)

Hanah and Lee were the only two Malaysian Chinese participants in the study. According to Hanah, coming from a Chinese family, they perceived that individuals could get the best education from England/UK. With this perception instilled since she was young by her Chinese family, as she mentioned, Hanah believed that the UK would be the ideal place for her to pursue her PhD. It is also important to note that the transnational space that her family encouraged her to pursue her PhD in is 'England', or elsewhere as long as it is in the UK. This suggests the embedded 'symbolic status' that 'world class' education is synonymous to HE institutions in the UK. Similarly, Lee's parents had the same perception of the UK education system. As he comes from a middle class family, due to this perception, his parents supported his siblings and him to study in the UK and US. When deciding on a country to study abroad, the United States was often considered alongside the UK. This was probably due to the environment of Anglosphere countries as historically colonial powers; hence, they could offer international students a way to acquire cultural capital. For example, improving their English language skills was often cited by the majority of the participants for their sojourn, as illustrated in previous literature (Crystal, 2003; Neely, 2013) that would give advantages to graduates in the labour market.

In contrast, for participants who are married, their nuclear families are important to them. In their discourse, it is important that they would be able to spend more time with their families, besides focusing on their studies. For example, for Fahmi, although realising that his future profession in academia would benefit him less financially, due to family commitments, he decided to pursue a career in academia, which first required him to continue his PhD.

> Do you want the truth? Okay, first I worked as [Anonymised industry], which is my workplace is at offshore, and not land. So, *bile kite kat* [when we were]

> offshore, something that we missed a lot is family time. So, I wanted to be a lecturer a long time ago. And when I got the chance to work offshore, I stopped my dream to be a lecturer. I worked there for three years, and after I missed my *Ramadhan*[27] and *Hari Raya* [Eid][28] altogether at the sea, so I think there's a need of wind of change.
>
> (Fahmi, Male, STEM, middle class)

For Fahmi, when asked regarding his motivation to further his PhD in the UK, he mentioned that he changed his profession from working in an industry to academia. The reason being was so that he was able to have more family time. Although his decision for his prior profession was due to financial advantages, after marriage, his priority shifted to dedicating more time for his family. Family is important as strong relationships with family was the motivation for most of the married participants to continue their PhD especially when they had the chance to study abroad under the lecturer's scheme from the Malaysian Government. This scheme gave him the opportunity to realise his ambition as well as giving him the chance to spend more time with his family, albeit providing less financial advantages, it was something that he was willing to sacrifice.

Similarly, Alif's motivation was his family when discussing about his motivation to pursue his PhD in the UK. However, the sojourn might come at a cost to members of the family's own lives, especially the wives.

> I think the motivation is the family - because they sacrifice a lot - and like my wife, she needs to resign from her job before - just to follow me to [Anonymised city].
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH, middle class)

Alif's narrative suggests the archetypal example of the 'feminine' in Asian culture in which women are supposed to sacrifice for the family, and in Alif's case, his wife resigned from her previous job.

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[27] Ramadan, ninth month of the Muslim calendar, when Muslims fast during daylight hours Source: https://ms.oxforddictionaries.com/

[28] A Muslim festival, in particular Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha. Source: https://ms.oxforddictionaries.com/

> (…) and the other motivation is of course, being a married and a father to two kids, ah, I would like to have the different experience for the family. I would like to put the dynamics in our life.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM, middle class)

Ahmad similarly articulated the expected performance as a husband and father to provide and support the family. In Ahmad's case, it is perceived that he felt that it was his responsibility to provide 'dynamics' or new experiences, which would enrich his family's lives, which their time abroad would be able to offer. In terms of student parents' narratives, the male participants in the study articulated their desire to 'enhance' their family lives more than the female participants who are student parents. Another participant, Nasir, mentioned that, initially, both he and his wife were supposed to continue their studies together.

> And then other than that my wife she is also - she's also a University lecturer. So, I guess I got influenced both from my career and also both from her… she was also - during time she was also planning to do a PhD and then we were both like, let's find a place since you wanted to do PhD, why not - let's look at that together. And then it turned out she is not doing her PhD yet. I'm the one who started to do the PhD.
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM, middle class)

Nasir, for example, was encouraged and influenced by his wife who was a university lecturer to further his study. It could be suggested that they supported each other during the process; however, although Nasir refused to discuss further why his wife did not continue her PhD at the same time, it was apparent from Nasir's narrative that their children needed their attention, especially during sojourn where the sojourners have less support from their established existing social networks such as parents or caretakers back home. In this case, according to 'traditional' cultural expectations, Nasir's wife would take care of the children and household due to her husband's demand for focus on his PhD work. In these cases of student parents, the gendered roles of the participants' spouses as wives are highlighted. However, as highlighted in previous literature on transnational families, realising the advantageous gains of sojourn through education in terms of social, cultural and symbolic capital for the family (Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005), the family as a unit decided to sojourn. Although it was beyond the scope of the study to look into the experiences of the spouses and family members who moved abroad as dependents, the lived experiences of the dependents during this transition process narrated by the student parents suggests a

glimpse into the established family roles during their time abroad. This suggests that despite being abroad, in terms of familial relationships, it is perceived that conventional partner roles are maintained (as practised by most Asian families) as opposed to more liberal practices by the westerners (see Section 3.3.6). Customs and cultural practices in terms of gender roles in this case transcend geographical borders which also illustrates the transnational notion of 'being here and there at the same time', (Vertovec, 1999).

For other participants who were still single during the interviews being conducted, 'family' still remains as a strong discourse for sojourn. For Hamid, his sojourn was a personal goal to hold a PhD degree before the age of 30, as well as to increase his family's status.

> I have my goal actually to have my PhD before 30. Yeah… maybe I'm-- *tak tau la nak cakap macam mana* [I do not know how to say this], but I'm the only person in my family - that managed to go into university… so why not continue until PhD, so that - I think because people *akan pandang* education [will think highly of education]. I know that feeling when my parents - *bile orang pandang anak tak pandai semua* [people perceived that your children are not smart] - but why not I try to prove them wrong. So, that's my goal, so I need to - my aim is to have a PhD before 30.
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM, working class)

'People', or society's perceptions on family achievement surfaced quite frequently in Hamid's narrative. He believed that it was his responsibility to improve his family's status in the eyes of others, and one way to do it is through pursuing the highest education level possible, which is perceived highly by the community. He believed that it was his responsibility to prove to others in his hometown and perhaps obligation to his family to do so. Similarly, another participant, Qayum expressed the same sentiment.

> So, basically, I'm the first in the family to actually study abroad, and the first person in the whole village who studies in the UK. That's actually my aim… the first person to go abroad from my village.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM, working class)

For both Hamid and Qayum, besides their personal aspiration for PhD degrees, family were quoted as a reason for their sojourn. Both, who come from similar socioeconomic

backgrounds, stressed their responsibilities to elevate their families' backgrounds, as well as gaining 'symbolic' status from their sojourn.

Meanwhile, for the participants in the study who are single, their relationship status was considered as a motivation or deterrent for their sojourn. Coincidently, in my study, there were more female participants who were single than men when the interviews were conducted. One of the participants in the study, Leah, was one of the participants in the study who was single.

> Another (reason) is yeah, family… my father actually didn't encourage me to come to the UK, but I think he was happy with that. Plus, I'm single, no commitment yet. So, why not?
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH, middle class)

What Leah narrated, above, could be suggested as ambivalence of her family's view towards her seeking an international education. Leah mentioned that her father 'didn't encourage me to come to the UK, but I think we was happy with that'. On one hand, lack of commitment was considered one of the push factors for pursuing a PhD abroad for several female participants who were single. This may illustrate a gender factor in which female participants in the study perceived not being married and in a relationship as having less responsibility and risks. As elaborated earlier in this section, married individuals' have responsibility towards their family, and this is one of the considerations that the family as a unit has to decide when it comes to sojourning abroad compared to sojourners who are single. Thus, the financial risks for sojourners who are single are considered much lower than those who are married with families. This enabled them to pursue their studies due to their status. For another single female participant, the sojourn was also seen as an opportunity to socialise and meet a potential spouse. However, it was found that for the majority of the female participants, due to their personal responsibilities, the social capital that they envisioned through their sojourn is in reality, 'imagined' (Quinn, 2005).

A few participants, especially those who are single, also mentioned that their mothers are an important figure not only for motivation for their sojourns, but also to ensure their successes[29]. For Sarah, her sojourn was encouraged by her mother's wish. This echoed Reay's (2004b) notion of mothers' emotional investments in their children's

[29] Motherhood in Islam has a status that has been elevated above all other relationships: according to the prophet, 'Paradise lies at the feet of mothers' (p. 126). Source: Husain, F. (2000). Reproductive issues from the Islamic perspective. *Human Fertility*, 3(2), pp.124-128.

academic pursuit[30]. This form of capital is probably one of the more difficult to describe because, as noted by Nowotny (1981), it may appear as a private dynamic rather than something that is publicly demonstrated. As discussed by Reay (2004), this form of capital could also be transferable from one family member to another. From the participants' narratives, emotional capital emerged in the discourse as a purpose for their sojourn and motivation for pursuing a PhD in the UK, which was enthused by significant immediate family members such as parents, spouse, siblings and children.

> Actually she's (my mother) the one who asked me to pursue my study in PhD because after I done my Master - I'm doing research mode for my Master programme. So, actually that is the - the final thing I want to do in my study. I don't want to pursue any higher education anymore but then, my mom said, she wants at least one of her sons or daughters to have a PhD (laughs) So, that is why... Okay… because I got the scholarship, why not.
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM, middle class)

> (…) but then my family *macam sangat galakkan lah* [is really encouraging]. *Sebab* my sister *memang tak nak sambung* study *langsung after dah kerja* [Because my sister did not want to continue her studies at all after she started working]. So, she's comfortable with her own career. So, my mum *macam harapkan I lah* [like, my mum depends on me].
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM, middle class)

> (…) please pray for me so that I will get this one and, you know, if I get this one my life will change completely. And all I want is you to feel that this is okay because I know that if my mum is not really happy, I don't think I will get it. That's always like my feeling. My mum doesn't like, thing's not going to happen. So I asked her permission, just... just let me do what I want to do. This is my dream. So, I just got her blessing and prayed so she said, 'Yes... I'll give you my bless [sic] and I will pray for you'. Because earlier she said she doesn't want me to study abroad anymore.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM, working class)

Based on the narratives above, Sarah and Mazni were faced with a similar predicament. According to Sarah's narrations, although she did not intend to continue her doctoral studies after completing her Master's degree, she was encouraged by her mother, who wanted one of her children to have a PhD degree. Although it was not articulated

[30] see section 2.2.1

directly, it is perceived that having a PhD is regarded as having a symbolic value of its own. In Sarah's case, this pursuit could suggest 'taking one for the family' and fulfilling one of her mother's wishes for her children. Meanwhile, in Qayum's case, he believed that his mother's blessings for his sojourn is important as an 'insurance' for his success. Again, a mother's blessing to him is really important for his success, or otherwise "thing's not going to happen" as he mentioned. These narratives highlight the powerful family institution where individuals' aspirations are often shaped by desires of the 'greater good' of the family (Stivens, 1998, p. 17).

5.3.2 Employers

Besides family, employers are also regarded as another motivating factor for pursuing the participants' sojourn. Besides the supervision from experts in the field, which benefits the participants personally, as previously discussed[31], a degree abroad and the rank of the particular field in the university was highly perceived by the participants' respective sponsors or employers.

> I will be a lecturer at the [Anonymised University], Malaysia and the Dean of my school wanted the staff to get their degree abroad. So, she asked me to … not asked… (laughs) she forced me to accept the offer.
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH, middle class)

> I'm under sponsorship under [Anonymised University], so they're the one who kind of, um, I would see lead me to study in [Anonymised University] because [Anonymised field] is one of their greatest…the top University, the top school in the UK. So, [Anonymised field] is like in the top three after Harvard and Cambridge…
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM, middle class)

For both cases above, it could be suggested that the main influence for the participants' decisions were due to their employers. In Leah's case, her superior wanted the staff in the department to 'get their degrees abroad'. When she was asked to accept the offer from the university in the UK, she had already started her PhD programme at a local university. This could probably be due to the reputation of degrees abroad, which could indicate credibility of the department and University at large. Furthermore, Leah was attached to one of the most prestigious research universities in Malaysia, which further supports the need to equip employers with internationally-recognised 'world class' education. Similarly, in Maria's case, the

[31] see section 5.2.2

symbolism and reputation (symbolic capital) of the university, which ranked highly in her field as well as the world, led her to the university. In both these cases, it could be suggested that sponsors or employers played a distinct role in directing the students to the 'ideal' HEIs that would not only benefit their employees academically due to these institutions' established reputations, but also elevate their institutions' reputations upon the sojourners' return.

Raudah, mentioned that she was only in the UK as it was a requirement by her employer.

> So... if you asked about motivations and aspirations, I'm not really sure whether I'm motivated by myself or ... I have to further my study because it's a requirement by the employer.
>
> (Raudah, Female, SSH, middle class)

As narrated by Raudah, pursuing her PhD is considered as part of her job, and she mentioned, "a requirement by the employer". This echoed the findings in Salisbury et al. (2010), where women are often encouraged by prominent figures in their lives, in this case, Raudah's employer, besides the degree being a requirement for her position as a lecturer. Raudah, interestingly, also mentioned during her interview that she saw herself as being 'out-station' for her PhD training as it is part of her job. This captures the essence of living a transnational life as mentioned by Vertovec (2009), whereby the cross-border experience is considered as less daunting despite the distance and they are still able to maintain their link with their family and friends back home easily, especially with today's technology.

Besides motivation from family members and employers, making a contribution to others (Smith, 2007) is one of discourses that kept emerging in the transcripts. This is also what Levitt (1998) described as social remittance to the sending country. Although several participants may have expressed more directly than others how they hoped to make their contributions, it was clear that probably the participants were associating the purpose of research in benefiting others.

> (…) not only my knowledge that I'm going to bring back to Malaysia, but the education or the experiences that I have especially in terms of the system that I need to transfer back to Malaysia…
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH, middle class)

What can also be inferred is that the participants' want their 'habitus' to change and, as a result, they will almost unconsciously bring these different skills and experiences back to their day-to-day practices in Malaysia (Levitt, 2001). Also, this indicates the sojourners' aspirations for social remittance in terms of knowledge to be shared with people in their home country, rather than simply for their own benefit (Smith, 2007).

Wahida was clear from the beginning to have migration in mind, and was the only participant who mentioned making a contribution in a globalised sense, in comparison with other participants who indicated making contributions to specifically to their home country.

> Ahh and then contribute to the society… doesn't matter where... Scottish society or Malaysian society... and I hope to be respected in my own industry - I hope to contribute to the - you know, to my discipline either by working in a private industry or a public industry - I just hope that I'll make a contribution.
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH, middle class)

Wahida did not explicitly articulate in what sense she wished to make her contribution, but it was clear that she wished to give back to the industry she is in. Lily on the other hand relates the contribution aspect to her role and identity as a lecturer.

> I just have to make sure I use that knowledge… go back to Malaysia and bring the knowledge that [I] learnt here.
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM, middle class)

> The working culture… because they (the 'western' people) are so professional. In terms of time, professionalism… that's what I want to learn. And my expectation, to finish in three years, and hopefully I will become someone who is better than before.
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM, middle class)

> (…) because as a lecturer, our main role - If I'm not mistaken is teaching, and then we need to do research, and then we need to be active in community service. Umm, and then we also need to be involved in administration and also the activities at the university level, faculty level. So, research and teaching cannot be avoided… these two roles, I would say and duties as lecturer - these are the - what we call that - the main roles as a lecturer to contribute to the community, to the country, contribute academically in terms of doing research.

(Lily, Female, SSH, middle class)

As mentioned above, her roles and responsibilities as a lecturer did not stop at the institutional level, in her case, the university she is attached to, but also at the community and national level. This suggests that the contribution of academia encompasses the institutional level but extends to the community in this neoliberal globalised era. It is interesting to note that only one male participant mentioned this as their motivation to pursue their doctorate. From the narratives, both male and female participants articulated various capital accumulations through doctoral training in the UK. However, male participants were more likely to be motivated by personal beliefs and experiences that international education could offer, while women tended to discuss being more motivated by significant figures in their lives (Salisbury, et al., 2010; Boey, 2013)[32]. This discussion could further be extended to the gendered discourse surrounding a 'mother's wish' or aspirations for their children, which is also embedded in Islamic perspectives of a mother's status in the religion.

5.4 Conclusion to the Chapter

In conclusion, the motivations for the participants pursuing doctoral degrees are complex and entangled with both personal aspirations for capital accumulation, as well as others significant in their lives. Transnationalism and capital theories help to look at the multifaceted ways these motivations are intersected with various social positioning. The stories also suggest UK as a hegemonic power of education provider especially to Malaysia as a colonial legacy. These theories also help to explore participants' motivations for study abroad as well as their imaginings of how and what it will be like. Although there is a strong desire for 'self-improvement' in this capital acquisition, this cannot be understood only in individualist terms but, also, in terms of their connections with others. Finally, as I exemplify in the narratives of the participants in this study, these experiences are also in many ways gendered.

[32] see 3.2.2

Chapter 6

Language, Culture and Religion

6.1 Introduction

Previously, in Chapter 5, I discussed the students' motivations for their sojourn in the UK for their doctoral studies. As demonstrated earlier, the participants' motivations were due to aspiration for various types of capital accumulation especially faith capital, in which some participants viewed that gaining knowledge itself is crucial as part of Islamic teachings as well as benefiting others with the knowledge that they gain or 'social remittances' (Levitt, 1998) where the participants bring back ideas, thinking and values from the host country to their home country. Also, it can be suggested that gender differences in terms of motivation for sojourn exist from the participants' narratives.

In the present chapter, I will discuss the sojourners' experiences during their sojourn in terms of language, culture and religion. Most of the students in the study did not anticipate many problems in terms of academic and language matters due to a similar education system and English language being their second language in Malaysia, and fulfilling the language requirement; however, their narratives painted the complexities of their living experiences due to their identities, especially in relation to their status as Muslims in the UK; language challenges beyond their language proficiency; as well as learning in western universities. Bourdieu's capital theory (1986) is useful in casting light on the lived experience of the students[33]. His notion of 'field' and capital are useful in illuminating what the students experience as agents with embodied dispositions (habitus) with their new environment. The transnational lens that this study adopts also challenges previous perspectives where individuals are expected to completely integrate. Through a transnational lens, the participants draw on various cultural and other resources from both their home and host countries, which would benefit them (Levitt, 2011). Thus, all these can be explored through a micro-level exploration of their discussion of everyday interactions and communications, which are explored during the interviews.

[33] See section 2.2

6.2 Language

When discussing language experience, naturally, the participants would compare what they have experienced in terms of practicing English language back in their home country with their current situation. According to Byram (2013), language can act as a social identifier to differentiate between the 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'. Although possessing good English proficiency is highly commendable and prized in Malaysia, especially in the workforce, the majority of my participants candidly illustrated how it is not usually socially desirable to use the English language in social settings, and how it could be perceived negatively by the society back home. These narratives are also important with regard to Bourdieu's conceptual tools of capital, habitus and field as the change of environment would inevitably affect the participants' language experience among others, and transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009) helps in understanding the ways in which participants negotiate habitus between home and host countries.

First, due to the status of the English language as the *lingua franca*, the majority of the participants worked as well as studied, or would be serving at various tertiary institutions upon completion of their studies. Thus, many of them indicated that they did not expect much of a problem concerning language during their studies. Moreover, the English language is a second language in Malaysia. The experience in the target language environment would also benefit them when they returned from their sojourn and employment in academia, as the English language is used as the medium of instruction in Malaysia. This language experience also attracted many international academics to pursue their postgraduate studies in the UK.

> Honestly I think the only way you can learn the other language properly if you actually lived in the country.
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

> I think if you want to learn a language, other language, you have to mix with the society, you have to immerse with the society. You have to speak with the native people of that language.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

One of the problems pointed out by the participants in the study was their difficulty in understanding the accent of the local people around them. Something simple such as making mundane everyday tasks, making phone calls to arrange for house viewing or other matters, could be a challenge. This sentiment was expressed by the majority of the participants, especially during their early months in the UK. Although the challenge

could be simply transitory, it suggests, however, the participants' expectation and exposure to 'the standard English Language'. Besides that, it also shows power relations within the UK, in which the dominance of southern English upper/middle-class accent is seen as the 'standard' accent, which is a desirable embodied cultural capital, associated with power and prestige.

However, several participants narrated that language use is often associated with individuals' ethnic and national identities. For example, using English could be perceived as being a 'traitor' to not only ethnic, but also religious and national identities.

> In [Anonymised city], language doesn't mean that you are a follower of a certain religion. But in Malaysia because we have this history of colonisation. Um, how the Christian preachers or missionaries? - Priests come to Malaysia… they promote Christianity so they speak in English. So maybe (for) Malaysian, so it's kind of associate yourself with English.
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH)

Another participant, Azlan, who had a slight American accent, reminisced on a negative experience during a job interview that he had back in his home country.

> They asked me to tone it down, and told me I'm exaggerating my accent.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

> Malays in Malaysia have the tendency to shy away from speaking in English - especially during social interaction - because only by hearing other people using English in communicating to their friends, not to them, also they'd be laughing.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, SSH)

The narratives above, among others, illustrate the common perceptions that the participants have in their home country. We could see how the participants see that a person's language choice and use could be related to his or her identity as mentioned by Leah and Azlan. Furthermore, in informal social settings, as described by Ahmad, using English is not socially desirable, one could be an object of ridicule. These few examples show the complicated nature that the participants had with perception towards the English language, and how their sojourn may affect their worldview and habitus through their everyday life experiences. Being in the UK, the participants seemed to adopt a

different identity than in their home country. In the host country, the participants considered themselves as international students—a 'foreigner' and the English language is not seen as 'another' language but, rather, the language to gain access to information and exchange with others. In the narratives above for example, using the English language in Leah's case could be suggested as relating oneself to another religious identity, and for Azlan, although it was required of him to use English in the interview, his American accent was unkindly received and could be regarded as trying to adopt a 'western' identity. Finally, for Ahmad, using English amongst Malaysians, especially Malaysian Malay, could be threatening to his 'face' and risk becoming an object of ridicule by his social groups. The narratives above illustrate several common perceptions of the society in the participants' home country. These observations were similar to previous studies in Malaysia where Malaysians were expected to speak in the Malay language (Rajadurai, 2010; Rajadurai, 2010b). Despite the participants' change of environment, what they remembered and chose to tell me as a researcher showed the significance of these events in their lives with regard to common perceptions about the English language, and how they experienced it in Malaysia. These narratives are important as these dispositions that they have concerning the English language as their second language are renegotiated in the different spaces (in Malaysia and in the UK).

Because of the common perceptions back home, the majority of the participants felt that they had less opportunity to use English actively other than in formal settings such as in classrooms. When I discussed with my participants their life histories during the initial stage of the interview sessions, the majority expressed their language of choice at their respective homes, schools, and universities was the Malay language. English was only used sporadically during formal settings such as classroom presentations and job interviews. In the present study, when asked about the language preferred when interacting with Malaysian people from different ethnic groups in the UK, the majority of participants in the study expressed that they prefer to use the English language with Malaysian Chinese and Indians in Malaysia. The majority of the participants also mentioned that Malaysian Chinese and Indians are much more comfortable speaking in English than the Malay language. However, there several participants did mention that they would use Malay first as it is Malaysia's national language and "because I am talking to my countrymen."

> If I start a conversation with another Malaysian, I would most probably use Malay. It's my default language when talking to Malaysians... unless he or she starts to talk in English then only I will reply in English.
>
> (Farid, Male, SSH)

Similarly, Farid expressed during interview that the national language is seen as a 'default' language when interacting with other Malaysians regardless of the location of the conversation. In terms of space and presentation of self in Malaysia where people are likely to 'know' how other people are expected to act and behave, language is seen as an identification of self, and Malaysian people are expected to use the Malay language. These expectations of others on how they should portray themselves show as a form of respect and pride as Malaysians. These narratives also suggest the previous habitus of experiencing English as a second language in their home country.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of the students mentioned that one of the goals of pursuing an international education is to gain linguistic capital, which is to develop better proficiency in their second language, English. As the United Kingdom provides the ideal environment in terms of support for the acquisition of the target language, the majority of participants were confident that this is ideal for their linguistic aim. These 'expected' acquisitions of linguistic capital are not only mentioned by the participants in relation to their own views, but also they described this as the perspective of family and friends back home. A few of the participants narrated their amusement when friends and families asked them to demonstrate how the local people speak. This sentiment was shared by the majority of the participants.

> People would assume that--- *kamu keluar negara ni* (your sojourn abroad), okay, of course your English will be going to get very good! They're going to expect that way, but no... I'm not attending classes every day. I don't have -- of course I have some native speakers... from US, from Scotland, so we're not going to speak English every day (laughs) And I'm not going to meet them every day. So - it is very hard for me to improve that - um - that kind of communication.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

What is illustrated by Hanah and a few other students would be an example of one of the expectations that the students, besides other people back in their home country, have on sojourners.

> […] when I come to the UK, it's really helped me to improve my English because many local people, not just local people, people that speak English, therefore, in order to survive here, we have to speak English.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

For Lily and the majority of the participants, English was also considered as the language to 'survive' as she described. Being in the target language environment forces the participants to use the language. It also provides them a safe environment, where they would not be criticised or teased by others around them. Several of the participants shared common experiences of the English language use in their home country as described in the earlier section.

Next, Lisa and Faliq expressed similar sentiments in their narratives in terms of their language practice during their sojourn. However, due to their previous mobility and present sojourn in the UK, from their narratives, they expressed a stronger desire to preserve their native language and try to take full advantage of their encounters with other co-nationals.

6.2.1 Lisa and Faliq

Compared to other participants, Lisa and Faliq were the more mobile students in the study. Lisa, for example, had travelled to and lived in various European countries. Besides being the most mobile, she is also married to a Dutchman and predominantly communicates in English, which is the second language for both of them.

> Although if I see Malaysians now having lived away from Malaysia for a long time, I would ask them… The first thing I would ask it, are you Malaysian? In Malay language which is, *'Malaysian ke?'* or *'Orang Malaysia ke?'* [Are you Malaysian?] […] and if they say yes, then I will speak in Malay to them. And that's the reason for doing that is because, because, I don't get to speak Malay. So, when I do have a chance, I take the chance. Although I know it is not helpful to the other person because the other person would probably want to speak in English because they are here to learn English, probably. So... (laughs)
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

From her narrative, due to being abroad for a long time, her desire to speak her native language was stronger although realising that the other Malaysians' intentions for sojourn is to improve their language proficiency in the second language.

> I think that what happens when you're away from your country for a long time, people, when they find somebody they understand some language then they use that language. Even though they are not that fluent in it. I mean for example, one of my former colleagues, who's a Singaporean - he can speak Malay not that

> well but that did not stop him from speaking Malay to me. I can speak Malay as well but not that well! (laughs)
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

These narratives illustrated that not only Lisa's motivation to use her native language (Malay Language), but also other people around who had been away from home as well. Besides that, Lisa also mentioned that she used Malay to speak to her cats at home. Although this may sound trivial, such narratives illustrate the reality of 'linguistic loss' experienced by Lisa and her yearning to use her native language. This demonstrates one effect of mobility in terms of linguistic loss, and the individual's agency investment in creating opportunities in retaining the native language during her sojourn (de la Piedra, 2011). This demonstrates the sojourners' desire to maintain their cultural practice, in this sense language, while being away from home. Likewise, Faliq who had lived for a few years in the US for his previous degrees also narrated similar sentiments.

> *Kalau boleh saya* approach *dengan* Malay *jugak sebab* [If I could I would approach someone (Malaysian) in Malay], you know, as Malaysian? So, *kalau boleh nak cakap* [if I could I would speak] English *tapi saya* personally *rase* Malay [but personally I think Malay]… *Tapi kalau die balas balik dengan* English, so cakap Malay jugak [But if that person replies in English, I still use Malay].
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM)

Compared to my other participants, Faliq consistently used more Malay than English throughout my interview with him. This strong desire to use his native language could be because he has less opportunity to practice it due to his previous and present sojourn. These investments made by the participants, Lisa and Faliq, are important in preserving not only their native language but also in relation to their cultural identity. These data suggest that for participants who were away from home longer, they were more active in seeking opportunities to maintain their cultural values in terms of language as transnational migrants.

6.2.2 Qayum and Azlan

In contrast, Qayum's narratives demonstrated his independence in learning the English language since a young age and his aspirations to study abroad. Coming from a 'humble' background, from his narratives, he demonstrated his investment in language learning from a young age.

> So, basically my parents, my parents don't know how to speak English, except yes and no. That's all they know. They don't know how to speak; they don't know to speak at all. So, it was quite difficult to if I do my homework or assignment in English, I cannot ask anyone about my assignment. So, everything well I was independent. I read myself, I correct my own grammar errors, all the mistakes, you know, so basically I learn English by myself and by talking to people, obviously.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

During his first year in university, realising that the majority of students there were Malay, he had also made the conscious decision to transfer from a public university to a less known private university in Malaysia.

> I don't care okay, this is my life, I don't care whatever so I just go there. But it was actually a good step point for me actually because over there I need to speak English with everyone because all my friends are Chinese and Indian, and we have a lot of international students. And that's the place where I started to speak more English. I start to do a lot of things with all international friends and don't speak much Malay, obviously. So in [Anonymised University] I speak a lot of Malay language with my friends, which I don't think I improve a lot.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

His narrative illustrated not only how he was willing to invest in English language learning, but also the financial commitment for his choice. *"But still you know, when you're studying in a private university, you know, you have [student loan] that you have to pay back which is not really good because I don't want to live with a huge debt."* To Qayum, making a financial sacrifice when he did not have to was essential for his English language learning. This not only reflected his individual agency and investment in his language learning due to his future trajectories, but was also motivated by his belief that language is best acquired through socialising with people from different ethnicities and backgrounds. Although he was aware of the possible risk in his future financial position, he was willing to make the sacrifices needed for his linguistic capital acquisition.

Similar to Qayum, Azlan also reflected a strong investment in his English language learning compared to other participants. Azlan, who was an English teacher before his sojourn, also showed his investment in his English language learning by joining various

clubs and societies when he was back home as well during his time in the UK. *"I talked to sale girls because… and that time the most popular product is Body Shop. So, I always visit Body Shop outlet and try to converse with them. I would ask them so how do I use this in English... you know?"* and *"I like to chat with anyone next to me in coffee shops"*. These narratives, albeit trivial, not only illustrate Azlan's outgoing personality but also his investment in creating opportunities in the target language community to benefit his cultural capital.

Based on Qayum's and Azlan's stories of their English language learning, this not only illustrates the importance of ethnicity and language use in their home country, but also their individual agency and investment to acquire the target language to support their future aspirations in terms of mobility to pursue postgraduate degrees abroad.

6.2.3 Accent

Several students expressed that they did not expect a different accent than the 'standard English' accent that they had been accustomed to when they were back home from their earlier exposure to the English language both formally and informally. These experiences agree with Allen and Higgins (1994), in which they found international students found local accents challenging.

Several of the participants commented on how native speakers are not how they envisioned 'in the movies'. These comments reflect how their original perceptions of the host country can be romanticised; it also signifies the representation of how native speakers should be by the media. This could be illustrated by the sentiments below:

> (...) it's just sometimes the language, it's difficult to understand the Scottish accent is so strong - so, that's the only difficulty. Other things, I think, it's quite adaptable, I can adapt.
>
> (Aliff, Male, SSH)

> I didn't expect is in terms of their accent. Yeah... because I don't know what is Scottish accent like… but when I came here… it's quite a shock for I thought that the Scottish accent is quite similar with other English accents but it's quite different, but ahh - it's not - I didn't take too long to learn about their accent ... to understand about the accent... and it's very nice when I come to Scotland, I can learn their accent, how their terms, the words used by the local people…
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

> As you know this is Scotland, so they have their own accent.... and during the first day being here, I met my supervisor, she's Scottish. I had big difficulty to understand her because (laughs) because I thought UK English is like homogeneous throughout the island so everybody speaks the same... so it's not. Obviously, it's not. I have been struggling to understand them. So, it's more difficult… at least if you're in the university they try to slow down their speech... they try to adapt with you, but if you're talking to someone on the phone or... it's very difficult… challenging for me when I was in my early years here.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

From interviews with the participants, I could hear frustrations in their voices, which I could relate to myself especially during the early days of my sojourn. 'It made me feel I *tak pandai (I'm not good in)* English', a participant commented albeit jokingly. From these sentiments, this showed the students' struggle in the target language environment despite their prior language achievements (in this case IELTS and other English language requirements they had to meet). Furthermore, as illustrated by Sarah below, her inability to understand sometimes also resulted in preventing her from participating in conversations.

> Accents or dialect makes the conversation tricky to understand. Just needs focus to understand the whole conversation. Most of the time, I try to avoid those people with accents or dialect… Try not to have long conversation with them.
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM)

This not only portrays the contradiction of their perceived initial cultural capital of the English language, it also poses a challenge to participating successfully in the target language environment, albeit transitory. Furthermore, this could also threaten the participants' previous identities as perceived competent users of the language. However, throughout the transcripts, the participants shared positive experiences where their interlocutors would be willing to accommodate them when they were having problems understanding, for example by slowing down their speech.

6.2.4 English language skills

The majority of the students did not anticipate challenges in terms of language due to their past experience; however, a few expressed their concerns about particular English

language skills, especially concerning their studies. The skills focused by the students were reading and writing skills. This could be illustrated below:

> I don't have trouble speaking, I have trouble reading, so my understanding is a bit slower than other people. Language is quite a barrier for me… I prepared my sample in the wrong way, and then my supervisor knew about it, and then she *cakap* [said], oh what you've been understanding is wrong (sic).
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM)

According to the narrations above, we could see the language skills focused by the students varies. For Maria, she mentioned that one of her challenges was understanding her reading material, and how this affected her experiments.

For Hanah, when asked her challenges in terms of English language skills, she stressed writing.

> I still find it very hard, especially when I need to write the whole thesis right now. Previously I only write you know on an ad hoc basis, ad hoc reports--- individual reports. We don't really care what is before and after that particular report - as long as that report make sense, we go ahead. But right now, we are trying to combine all those reports together, so still so much to learn in terms of the cohesion, the connectivity, the way we articulate the whole thesis - how to write the thesis like a story.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

As articulated by Hanah, her main challenge was writing her thesis. Besides Hanah, the majority of the participants reported other challenges during their PhD journey. For example, Wahida expressed her frustration regarding her data collection experience.

> When you are on the ground, then you realised - oh, my God, whatever the textbook says cannot be used. So this is the challenge.
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH)

However, writing and reading skills are the students' main concern as these skills are related to producing their theses. However, for some students, interacting with native speakers could be intimidating. This could be illustrated as below:

> *Bile* you cakap dengan local *je takde*… [It only happens when you talk to the local] *Tapi macam boleh je tapi macam* brain fog *la macam tetibe* [I can just talk but… sometimes I can get brain fog].
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM)

According to Hamid, international students tend to understand each other regarding language challenges they could face. This made him feel less stressful interacting with other international students knowing the difficulty to express oneself. On the contrary, as a second or foreign language speaker, although he felt he could simply speak with other home students in English, sometimes he felt as if he experienced 'brain fog', as he puts it, around these students. It could be suggested that a speaker's identity could somehow play a role in providing a sense of support to the speaker. Being around the target language community could somehow put a person in a vulnerable position, as their interlocutors, in this case, native speakers, are viewed as possessing higher linguistic capital in terms of the target language (Morita, 2004). Thus, this could present the non-native speaker, in this case, Hamid, to feel self-conscious about his language use, for example, his word choice during interactions with his interlocutors. In post-colonial terms, his identity as a subaltern (Spivak, 1995) during interactions with his local interlocutors not only affects his language performance, but also his perceived marginal position 'to be heard'. What Hamid experienced also suggests that he could be questioning his 'legitimacy' as a second language speaker of English. His silence in some ways advocates that he would want to preserve his 'front stage' (Goffman, 1957) as a legitimate speaker and avoid making language mistakes in front of first-language speakers. This agrees with Morita's (2004) study where non-native language speakers felt that their identities affected their participation with the target language community.

Overall, the students also perceived their interactions with other home students positively. For instance, a few participants valued language feedback that they received from their office mates who are native speakers in terms of their language use.

> So, yeah I would say yes studying here we mostly speak in English so that's obvious so I would say my English really improved, and I could say I'm still learning even with my colleagues in office, I always ask them whether the way I'm talking like how do they understand the way I'm talking (sic), my accent my style and sometimes I just directly want them to correct me if I did some grammar error or like, some pronunciation error. So it really helps me a lot because they are native speaker in English so I know that they're supposed not to

> have any error when they talk. I would say I have like teachers surrounding me I would say they are my English teachers, so yeah it's really help me in me practising English.
>
> (Wahida, Female, STEM)

> The more you speak the more you can improve and become confident with the language compared to people speaking with people from our own country. Sometimes my friends will corrected (sic) my English if I said it wrongly or using incorrect terms.
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

Wahida mentioned that she was the only Malaysian in her office, which made her use the English language primarily when she was at her office. This presents a quality and favourable environment in terms of practising the target language. She could also be seen as a pro-active language learner whereby she was not embarrassed when being corrected and, furthermore, valued corrections from her peers. From her narrative, we could also see how she viewed her peers who are native speakers of English as possessing higher cultural capital in terms of the target language and believed that they could offer her language support. Similarly, Mazni shared Wahida's view that home students could offer valuable language input as compared to her co-nationals. It could be suggested that the identity of the interlocutors could play a role in the students' perception of the feedback they received, which the students value. From a postcolonial perspective, Wahida perceived her 'exotic' colleagues who are native speakers of the language as having more authority in the language over her co-national peers (Harrison and Peacock, 2010). This is also supported by previous research studies where the native speakers act as 'cultural hosts' in terms of language (Cathcart et al. 2006) and are considered as experts (Harrison and Peacock 2010).

Aside from the challenges that were reported from the participants' narratives, overall, the participants illustrated how their experience abroad had enriched their lives in so many ways. With regard to language practice, the majority of the participants narrated that they have gained confidence in using their second language in the target language environment. For a few, the positive language environment had also helped to develop their personalities, as suggested by Azlan.

> I'm more comfortable conversing in English all the time; I feel more comfortable. Um, I'm not shy anymore... I'm not shy anymore to make mistakes first. And I'm

> not shy anymore to converse in English, and, um, I think it's certainly developed my potential... and certainly will develop my personality as well.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

For Azlan, having to use English in his daily life not only resulted in making him comfortable, but he was no longer shy of making language errors. Besides having the advantage of being surrounded by the target language community to learn English, one of my participants, Saleha, who described herself as a 'glossophile' was one of the most multilingual participants in the study. In addition to being proficient in Malay and English, she also had the opportunity to learn Arabic when she lived in Saudi Arabia for a while, and the Hebrew language during her sojourn in the UK.

> I managed to attend a language course of the Hebrew language here… two years ago. The Hebrew language is like a twin sister to the Arabic language. So the phonetic way they write is a bit similar. So, I think it's a good opportunity for me to add another language to my profile so that I can with… furthermore Hebrew language is not being taught in Malaysia, you know because we have…
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Since the Hebrew language is perceived negatively in her home country due to religious reasons, she considered her sojourn her an advantage to learn the language. Her identity as Muslim was not considered an issue in comparison with the same situation in her home country. Language ideologies that are attached to certain languages (not only English as demonstrated earlier) can influence access to the languages. According to Kroskrity (2010, p. 192), "beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use […] often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other groups, and nation states". In Saleha's case, her sojourn had benefited her in terms of access to certain languages such as the Hebrew language, which would otherwise likely be inaccessible for her to learn in her home country. Hence, Saleha's new environment provided a new 'linguistic habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991) for her to use the language, which welcomed a contrasting disposition in which it is considered 'acceptable' to learn the language. In this example, Saleha's habitus is reconstructed due to her transnational experience.

As much as the participants ideally desired interactions in English during their sojourn, it was sometimes not perceived positively, especially with other co-nationals in the UK.

> It's very hard. Because I need to change everything because sometimes I don't know a word in English and I remember it in my mother tongue, but sometimes I

> forgot about words in Malay and in English. So, if I have that kind of attitude in Malaysia, people would say that I'm kind of a 'jerk' I think, trying to pretend that you cannot speak Malay. We should not because we are Malay. I think being in Malaysia is not a problem, but with Malays sometimes you need to prove that you are Malay by speaking in Malay. Malaysian, I think it's fine.
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH)

For Leah, as a Malaysian abroad who had been using the language for a while now, it was hard for her to recall certain words in Malay. In some cases, when this happens with other Malaysian speakers, it would not be accepted, or considered as pretentious.

> (…) when I came back to Malaysia last month, I feel when I hear someone talk English… because we have been exposed to the native speakers here, we try to talk to someone who is non-native, I think it's like quite weird.. which I don't experience it before… because it's like you keep on having this exposure to good language then you go back to Malaysia to Manglish so it's quite difficult for me to adapt.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Being in the target language environment proved to be an effective way for the students to practice their spoken English. The students shared similar experiences when using English when they were in their home country compared to during their sojourn. Although good English language proficiency is prized and considered as an advantage, especially in terms of employment, several of the students indicated that there was a stigma to using English language back home. There is a 'silent tide' that the participants had to deal with practicing the language when they were back home and the host country provided them with conducive platforms for language practice. The students expressed that being abroad gave them an identity as 'a foreigner' and this gave them room for making mistakes. This environment change in some ways benefits the participants in the study. From the narratives, this exemplifies how the participants' everyday language experience affected their previous understanding and perceptions of language use and, inevitably, their habitus during their sojourn in the UK. Also, as mentioned by Saleha, she was exposed to different types of English varieties—and in some ways, this described her as being in trans in terms of English language experience. It was also implied that it is important to be able to navigate herself successfully between the different English varieties to feel like she 'belonged'; that is, she felt that such linguistic capital would give her more 'legitimacy' to 'pass' as someone who 'belonged' rather than a 'foreigner'. A similar observation was found in Fotovation's

(2012) study where international students perceived that language proficiency affected their institutional membership in some ways.

6.3 Culture

When it comes to language experience, the majority of the participants mentioned it is considered much more stressful in informal, casual situations rather than formal situations. Informal encounters between people from different backgrounds require more awareness and understanding of different cultures. According to Harrison and Peacock (2010), international students feared making mistakes that are related to cultural issues, as demonstrated below:

> It took me some time to get used to the questions, to the people here, what are they asking me? How do they expect me to answer?
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM)

For Maria, simple questions sometimes could be problematic as she would overthink what would be the 'acceptable' and 'expected' way to answer certain questions and she feared making a cultural 'faux pas'. Other students mentioned that these problems were often encountered in informal situations.

Hanah mentioned that she mostly worked from home; therefore, she had little contact with others besides her husband. Due to this and other factors, a few of the other participants in the study besides Hanah aspired to improve their English language but, due to personal preference and perhaps family obligations, they had less contact with their colleagues when compared to if they were to work at their home universities.

> (…) so I find it very hard to - do that in casual conversation. Yup, I mean the daily conversation... I find it very hard for that one... that's why I said that, um, I don't really have - someone to converse with me - to talk with me you know, in English - in daily life that much for me to improve in that way. So, I feel a little bit awkward sometimes… I feel that I'm afraid that - I might sound too formal... to be involved in that particular casual conversation.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

One of her concerns was that she may sound too formal. She continued by attributing this to her English language use, which is almost exclusively only concerning academic matters.

> Because we write in academic... we read also in academic. Actually I have problem... use English in daily life - like casual talking, casual speaking - it's very hard for me because of - sometimes I think that I'm too formal. Maybe because we're used to writing and reading in an academic way.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

In the narratives above, there are distinctions between informal versus formal ways of communicating. As pointed out by Hanah, much of her (and the majority of the participants') English language exposure was in formal settings, for example, classrooms, presentations, and meetings. Therefore, the participants found that sometimes they are 'fish out of water' in more informal situations. Due to this, in order to feel they belong in these settings, the participants would have to adapt to their new habitus.

Besides English varieties and formal-informal language awareness, others attributed humour as a useful tool in social interactions. According to Holmes and Marra (2002), humour is used widely in formal and informal settings to reinforce boundaries between social groups, promote cohesion and solidarity between 'in-groups', as a way to 'do power' between subordinate and dominant groups. The following interview excerpts shed insights that there are underlying power dynamics in the students' interactions with one another.

> I have another Malaysian, a Thailand girl, I think I have Chinese as well. But we never mix with Irish or British or white. They tend to sit in a big table *makan sama-sama* [eat together], and when they are done we go inside the room, and then we have our lunch. I'm really close with a Mexican and Italian… it's just that our humour is different from their humour. For example, humour *dia orang banyak pun* jokes [their humour consists a lot of jokes]. *Macam* our humour *macam* different *lah* [Like, our humour is different]... [We] *cakap pasal* [talk about] what we see during our travels… but, they are not really interested in what we are talking about.
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

Siti explained that she is acquainted with other international students who are non-native speakers from various countries. Although she did not explain further why they had lunch separately, it could be suggested that perhaps the students belonged to different friendship groups based on the rooms allocated to them. She also attributed

this to distinct humour styles, and it is also suggested that the students' different background conversation topics could be a factor for interactional preference as well. It could also suggest that there could be 'silent' power-play through the use of humour. As suggested by Holmes and Marra (2002), this could be a way for the different social groups to further establish the social boundaries that exist between them. What Siti experienced may also suggest the legitimacy of the speaker (Bourdieu, 1991), which made it challenging for her to participate in different social groups due to the emphasis of her identity because of her inability to relate to the humour by some of her colleagues. This further emphasised the students' differences and social identities, as native and non-native speakers, where the native speakers hold more symbolic power in interactions. This observation also echoes Fotovation and Miller's (2014) study where not only was a physical divide experienced between the international students and their local peers but, also, a communication divide connected to the perceived 'limited repertoire of informal English' of the students, which included humour.

Next, a few of the students shared their observations based on cultural practice such as greetings.

> For example, when they are going to end the meeting or discussion, they would say 'bye bye, love'. They have 'love'. If you say that in Malaysia, there would be meaning (sic) something else. Different setting, I think. But people over here are more positive.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

> One thing that I like here is about greeting. They will greet us good morning! At the end of the day, they will say see you tomorrow, see you later! I feel appreciated; I feel I'm here. I feel that's lacking in Malaysia.
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM)

The narratives above illustrate 'western' greeting practices that are considered foreign to the students. Ahmad suggested that normally in Malaysian culture, referring to someone as 'love' could be indicating a romantic advance to someone, and he considered this as something positive that portrays the openness of 'western' social and cultural interactions. Another cultural observation was on expressing greetings to each other which, for Faezah, was lacking in Malaysia and she expressed her intention to emulate the host country convention when she returned to Malaysia. Based on her narrative, this simple gesture also gave her a sense of belonging to the academic community, which she appreciated. The phrase *'I feel I'm here'* also shows that she was

recognised as a ‘legitimate’ person by her colleagues in the UK and suggest her sense of belonging. This also suggests the varying presentation of the self during these students’ sojourn and at their home country. These simple acts of greeting increased the participants’ sense of belonging in their institutional settings.

Another example was narrated by Fahmi and Lee:

> Like, we're going to the shop, okay after we finished our trading, the people in Malaysia just smile, and nothing much to say. They smile and we go. But here, we pay, they talked a little with us... say thank you, and sometimes we get friends after we are done with business at the shop.
>
> (Fahmi, Male, STEM)

> The most obvious one is like, I'm not speaking Malaysian in particular, but I would say Asia… it's like we are not as friendly? Like… let's say… in Malaysia maybe it's beginning to... but it used to not. It was not used to be like this… so, basically you go to a restaurant and like you finished. And then here it's like enjoy your evening, have a nice weekend, like that. In Malaysia, no. Or maybe even with your work colleagues and staff like that you met them… you meet them and then you have a social conversation it's like or maybe on Monday you ask how was your weekend? In Malaysia it's like hallo, good morning! Yeah.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM)

Besides the narratives above on greetings, the interviews were sprinkled with the participants’ appreciation for other ‘western’ cultural practices such as opening doors, less horn-honking on the streets, and others. The majority of the participants admired these acts and hoped to bring these practices to their home country. These suggest a few examples as to how the participants aspire to bring back ‘social remittances’ (Levitt, 1998) to their home country. These everyday narratives which are taken-for-granted also suggest the sojourners observed ways of belonging to the cultures of the host country.

In another example, Leah shared her reflection on how normal everyday practices differed in Malaysia and in the UK.

> And at that time I was in a critical stage, and I called my friend in Malaysia like almost every day and I cried but how long people would help us? Even they have their own problems. But my friends they’re married and they can’t entertain me all the time, and the different time zone. I even called

> my not a friend, but an acquaintance! And that person is a he! Which shows how desperate I was at that time, and that person is someone that I … not hate, but have a grudge (laughs) grudge towards someone ... and maybe that seems like I'm a weak person… maybe I'm a weak person. But everyone has different toleration towards a new environment.
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH)

During my interview with Leah, she reminisced when she had a difficult time adjusting herself to the UK. This narration demonstrated the unspoken culture of gender relations experienced by Malaysians, and how she sought help from a male peer in Malaysia when she was in the UK. This suggests that her habitus in terms of gender relations shifted whilst she was in the UK, and she now considered it 'normal' to make the call. Nevertheless, at the same time, she also reflected that it is not something she would do if she were back in Malaysia. In another example, Fina narrated:

> In Malaysia, if they are my friends, I'm okay. But if they are married, I have to be careful. I don't want to have unnecessary misunderstanding. It's not a problem here. I don't find there's a gap. Malaysians who are married here I won't be that chatty. Ethnicity actually carries cultures as well. Different ethnics have different cultures.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

This demonstrates the shifting habitus that the sojourners have in terms of gender relations in Malaysia and in the UK and suggests the transnational experiences of the sojourners where they constantly renegotiate their habitus between 'here' and 'there'. In this sense, although she was aware of the more openness that people exhibit in the UK, she would have to respect the boundaries that she was familiar with in Malaysia while in the UK.

Next, for Hamid, his experience in the UK has changed his worldview in many ways especially as regards gender relations.

> Interviewer: How do you feel around men and women here and in Malaysia?
>
> Hamid: Okay here is more open la... That's very obvious right? *Sebab macam* [because, like]... em *kat* [in] Malaysia you try to avoid---*bile perempuan* [when girls]--- *macam kat sini* [like, here].. *bile die nak* [when they want to] hug you— *macam* [like] eh (cautious) *Macam kat lab macam lama tak jumpe* [Like, in the lab when you have not met for so long]. So, *macam* [like] 'how are you doing?'

Macam farewell *ke* [Like, for example during farewell]... So, that's why *macam* [like]-- *nak kata tak selesa tu--- macam tak la* [Not really saying that I'm uncomfortable]. *Tapi macam* possible *tu* --- handshake *tu macam okay je* [but a handshake is alright]. And then in terms of *bergaul tu.. macam.. ahh--- bergaul* [socialisation is, like] it's better---- *I tak tau* [I'm not sure] la... *macam kat Malaysia, macam bile you bergaul laki perempuan* [like when you are in Malaysia, when you socialise with men and women], you know your limitation what to talk -- and what not to talk.

Tapi bile you kat sini, bile you ada problem, macam [But when you are here and you have a problem]--- ahh-- I have a bestfriend I, *die perempuan* [she's a girl]. So, she doesn't mind… *kite orang tak rapat pun* [we are not that close], but she doesn't mind. *Die punya gambar-gambar anjing.. macam* [She showed me her dogs' photos] we try make excited oh wow wow! (laughs) *comelnya* [so cute]. *And tunjuk gambar-gambar boyfriend die.. cite ape yang berlaku* [showed me her boyfriend's photos and told me what happened] *Macam tak rapat pun... macam we try... macam die* [we are not that close, but we] try to create conversation. Try to get to know each other--- *macam kat Malaysia you penah ke cerita semua tu dekat lelaki? Tak penah kan? Tapi kat sini macam 'hangover' ape yang die buat malam tatadi.. ape yang die pecah kan pintu la semua* [like, in Malaysia, have you told a guy something like this? I'm sure you haven't.

But being here, she told me about her hangover, what she did---] And then *macam die tersedar... bangun kat sebelah orang lain..* [like, she woke up next to a stranger..] *Macam* [Like](laughs) That's weird… don't judge me! (laughs) So, I think I'm more alive here compared to Malaysia--- we try to be discrete... *macam you dengan adik beradik you pun ---- dengan perempuan pun takde expose macam* [even with your own siblings, I'm sure you are not that honest]--- (laughs) I know more about 'life' than in Malaysia... I try to understand.. what to speak and what not to speak.

(Hamid, Male, STEM)

As lengthily described by Hamid, he experienced less gender boundaries whilst in the UK as compared to when he was in Malaysia. There are several issues that can be unpacked based of his narratives of his experience in terms of gender norms and expectations. First of all, Hamid shared his experience of physical boundaries with his female friends. Gender distance is much more apparent in Malaysia and in some ways this limits his interactions with his female colleagues. However, it could be suggested that being in

the UK imaginarily 'blurred' the norms between men and women, and it is considered as acceptable in the UK.

Hamid is also aware that there are certain things that can and cannot be discussed or are considered as taboo in Malaysia. This shows the social and cultural specificity of presentation of self, what is appropriate has to be 'relearned', and thus demonstrates shifting habitus. Interestingly, these experiences, even as he described, make him feel more 'alive'. The restrictions between genders in Malaysia are mostly because of religious and cultural obligations. Although the different spaces pose an important criterion when determining the boundaries between men and women, as described by Hamid, adjustment had to be made in order to 'fit in' and in some ways this relate to Bourdieu's idea of 'fish out of water' and 'fish in water' concept. In order to feel belonging in a community with certain social and cultural practices, international students, in some ways, have to rearrange what they understood in the past with their current experience.

> So, then after that I start to realise that - I don't know - maybe I can talk with female English native speakers better? I feel much more comfortable rather than talking to male because male basically more dominant? When they actually produce their ideas? Yeah, that's what I think would be my problem. When I'm with these ladies, for example politics, feminism. Basically they gave me space to talk and that time I feel more comfortable. And compared to these two guys, Liam and Jay, they never gave me space...
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

Azlan, who by now has been established as the more proactive and sociable participant in the study, made a few local friends outside his academic institution. He mentioned not being given 'space' in his interactions with his male friends compared to his female friends, although he did not elaborate further on the topic. These narratives show the Malay cultures in terms of interactions between men and women as well as his renegotiation of habitus in the host country, in which individuals will continuously reconstruct their beliefs in terms of religion, gender boundaries, identities, and how they react to the world around them. Every day, new experiences and encounters present new knowledge in which negotiations are made with what they have understood in the past.

In another example, Siti's observation of men in Malaysia and in the UK highlighted her identity as a Muslim here:

> I think if I compare men here and men in Malaysia. I think men here are more respective [sic] towards me rather than men in Malaysia. I think they take… especially the hijab as a big sign 'oh she's a Muslim', I have to respect her. For example, here, if I'm in a conversation they tend to make dirty jokes. But whenever I enter the office, they will tone down on the dirty jokes, *tapi* Malaysia [but in Malaysia], but when I'm around Malay guys, they just talk about dirty jokes in front of me. Sometimes *macam* [like] they include inside the joke but in reality *sebenarnya* [actually], I don't feel comfortable talking about dirty jokes *macam tu* [like that] with men. So that's how I feel about men *la*. So, *kalau perempuan* [if women] here and Malaysia, I'm not sure, people here are more, they are less dramatic *kut* [maybe].
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

Siti's narrative represents the issue of gender in relation to her identity in a different locality. Her identity as a Muslim in the UK by donning the *hijab* or scarf by covering her head, shows her identity as a Muslim. This is regarded in the UK as being pious and thus it seems inappropriate for her male colleagues in the UK to share inappropriate conversation topics[34]. In contrast, being in Malaysia, when confronted with such events with her male friends, she has to 'pretend' that she does not mind when, in reality, she is rather uncomfortable. This shows the way she presents herself, and the how the audience's background play a role in the intimacy of relationships between Maria and her colleagues. Thus, this also shows that the issue of culture, gender and identity are intersected with one another.

> What I don't like is perhaps the young generation… they like to go to have a very open conversation when you talk about sexual things, so I don't like about that so much... but this is the UK, you know.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

A few participants shared that when it comes to religion, certain views that they have about Islam and being a Muslim have changed since they have been in the UK. The attitudes and beliefs that they have been brought up with, for example when dealing with the issues surrounding Islam and its beliefs and practice, are not static and their ideologies are constantly changing. However, as Saleha pointed out, one has to navigate him or herself successfully depending on their current localities as it occupies contrasting sets of beliefs, attitudes and ideologies pertaining to certain issues. Saleha

[34] see section 6.4

feels that she needs to make allowances for the different national context. However, with Maria it seems like her perceptions undergo a change - so she is 'journeying' in her mind as well.

In an example, Maria reflects her thoughts about a friend.

> Macam [Like] for example, I have a gay friend. But then if I have a gay friend I would be like, err tak nak lah kawan dengan die [I don't want to be friends with him]. But actually when I came to know him, he's actually quite funny, and he's very reserved, he respects me, although he has a boyfriend, he respects me more than my Malay friends, yup, Malay guy friends *lah*. So, that is actually an eye-opening thing for me.
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM)

> And what I can observe here is that there is no filter of conversation, you can talk about sexual ... um, things openly here without any boundaries… So, that's the difference here and back in Malaysia. And I got used to it because I'm a medical doctor. So, I think, talking about sexual things… in a proper way is okay (laughs). I think I've been more open here... when I started to work, I have to mix with the men. So, I think there is no problem. Perhaps here you can talk about things more open here.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

From a conservative Muslim's perspective, being gay is not socially acceptable in Malaysia. However, for Siti, who is a Muslim, although initially struggling with the idea of accepting gay friends, being in the UK opened her mind to the idea. She was surprised that she was actually more comfortable with him than with her Malay male friends in Malaysia. This shows that Siti had developed a slight change in terms of her personal value system (habitus), she has now developed a much more liberal worldview towards this issue. This also in a sense indicates a turn in the integration and openness to the L2 cultures when Siti discussed her acceptance towards the attitude towards homosexuality: according to Gardner (1979, p. 193), L2 learners are not simply acquiring knowledge of the target language but 'allow elements of another culture into one's own lifespace'. For Siti, this experience highlights the notion of gender and sexuality to her, which are discussed more openly in the UK compared to in Malaysia. In these examples, perhaps Maria more than Saleha renegotiated their prior religious dispositions due to their transnational experiences.

Besides the participants' observations on gender relations, they also discussed a few hindrances to socializing with the target language community. One of the reasons is the spaces where the students tend to socialise after office hours which are at the pubs. Thurnell-Read et al. (2018) reported that international students are aware of the drinking culture as part of socialising in the UK.

> One of the cultures here is to go to the pub. Like, every week there's an announcement… 'okay, this week we're going to this pub… there's a pub quiz, right? Sometimes we have family, and sometimes when we have small kids, it's difficult to join because it's in the evenings.
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM)

> Cultures that I learnt here… a lot. It's like… here the drinking culture is too much. Like, their leisure time is about... their leisure time is all about drinking. It's about going to the pub. So, which is very different from the one in Malaysia.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM)

> (…) we have to make sure that they know about Muslim life (culture), we are kind of like, good people, we can go to the pubs. There's no problems and we can just drink coke and then there's nothing with Muslim going to the bars. Just the pubs they play the music, that's fine and then we need to hang with them and talk, I guess. So, I basically join them and enjoy. And I think that's actually made our relationship much better, actually. So, they respect me being a Muslim.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

The narratives above were a few examples of the participants' perceptions and opinions about going to the pub. Although the participants were aware of the space for opportunities to socialise, this somehow conflicts with the norms in their home country, personal responsibilities, as well as religious beliefs. Faliq, for example, relates to being a father and how the socialising time clashed with the time he dedicated to his family. Meanwhile, Qayum regarded going to the pubs would benefit him in terms of socialising with the locals, but restricted himself to non-alcoholic drinks. These exemplify the renegotiation of habitus that Lee and Qayum had regarding going to pubs in terms of the 'appropriate' or legitimate 'fields' or social spaces for them to visit. These binaries between western-Asian cultures are seen as an amalgam, and what is considered 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate' is constantly renegotiable in the sojourners' everyday

lives. In transnational terms, Lee and Qayum reflected local 'ways of belonging' to a certain extent.

In another example, Fahmi talked about how pubs are the place where his football club meets and socialises, as well as his living conditions, which clashed with the culture in Malaysia.

> Yeah, like what I'm doing… I join this X Football Club. *Macam kat Malaysia, kite tengok bola ramai-ramai, kite tengok lat mamak kan?* And here, *die orang takde mamak, so die orang ada pub* (they do not have mamak, they have pubs). Going there, doesn't mean I drink even though that's a pub. So, that's one of the things la. And then, you know I live with another gender, so, yeah, in Malaysia, you can't live with another gender, but here it's very open... so, (…) *yang penting, jati diri lah* [the important thing is knowing your identity]. As long as we know what we do. Something like that. *Saya tahu macam keadaan sekarang saya tengok bola dengan mat salleh dekat pub, and then live with another gender, so, yeah, die cakap something lah* [I know in my situation now watching football with the locals at pubs and then live with another gender, so, yeah, they will say something]. But, I tend to not think about it because here it's different from there. Maybe *bile die* [when they] experiencing themselves, then they know why I do (sic).
>
> (Fahmi, Male, STEM)

Similarly, Fahmi regarded pubs as a place to watch football with friends, and felt that it was acceptable to occupy these spaces without alcohol consumption. He also explained that his living condition with a woman would be perceived negatively by society in Malaysia due to religious conditions. However, he pointed out that these factors could be negotiated as long as certain boundaries were not crossed.

Qayum again stated his perception of going to pubs, along with other cultural practices such as dancing, as ways to socialise with the locals.

> I have local friends who asked me to go to the pubs. For my mum, it's something bad because it's a pub... they serve alcohol. For example, I went to a Christmas lunch. My father asked did they serve alcohol? Dancing? How you know? We have Ceilidh dance. Of course we have to dance with a girl. So, if I don't dance, I'm not an interesting person to hang out with. So, I dance with girls. Luckily there's

> no Malaysian there (laughs). Otherwise they would think something is wrong with me.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

For Qayum, going to pubs and dancing are cultural practices that he had come to accept. From the narrative above, this also suggests that his parents' perceived these activities negatively due to religious belief; however, according to him, to 'fit in' in the host country, he was willing to shift his previous dispositions. Qayum displays his ways of belonging by immersing himself with the local cultures and practices.

The narratives in this section on culture illustrate the many ways that Malaysians in the UK renegotiate their identities, dispositions, and ways of being in the host country. The data also show how, for a few participants, their attitudes towards gender and sexuality shifted in the new environment.

6.4 Religion- Being Muslims

Another prominent theme throughout the majority of the participants' discussions is religion, in this case Islam. Previous studies have demonstrated how the belief in God as an attachment could be perceived as support (Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, 2008; Bostik and Everall, 2007) and in Allah for Muslims in particular (Abdullah, 2011) to face difficult times. The participants narrated how being away from home has almost altered their beliefs in some ways, as previously they were taken for granted but, now, they have discovered newfound appreciation for their religion. However, in terms of Islam and devotion to the faith, my participants indicated different levels of piety.

Saleha, below, narrated a strong relation between religion and deen 'way of life', although she is conscious of her identity as a Muslim woman in the UK with recent portrayals of Muslim and Islam in the media, she felt supported and safe especially in the vicinity of her institution. The majority of the participants articulated similar sentiments.

> It's *deen*[35]. It's not just the religion. It's like the way of life... everything from when you wake up in the morning till you sleep at night everything is about deen. And there is a specific reference, we have al quran and we have hadith to follow. So, I'm so I feel so, so lucky to study here because the society, majority

[35] Deen or Dīn (Arabic: دين, translit. Dīn, also anglicized as Deen) is an Arabic word that roughly means "creed" or "religion". It is used in the Islamic, Baha'i and Arab Christian religions

> of the people here, they can tolerate Islam. They are being very, very helpful, and they are not like so prejudiced towards Muslim... for the moment. Because if you're a Muslim woman, you tend to get more exposure to the negative things… but here is okay. They are very supportive. Because I remember my supervisor, if you remember the Brussels attack, and also in Paris, I am quite afraid if someone is attacking me verbally... physically… however, I think the area that I live is... the University area… they are like more educated people so when I discussed with my supervisor, he said that, if any people try to attack you because of your religion, it's wrong. And they are not educated enough. So, I got a very strong support with my colleagues and friends. So, I think as a Muslim woman, there's no problem for me to live here in the UK.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Siti expressed a similar sentiment:

> I never hide them in terms of things I need to do in terms of religion and ethnicity. I always tell them I need to pray five times a day, I'm fasting, I'm never ashamed to tell them… oh this is what the Malays do... drink or eat. I think that's a big part of who I am.
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

Fina further explained how being in the host country has also increased her religious practice and dependency on Allah (God).

> I think I feel maybe here a bit more dependent to Allah is more because I've been away from family and friends. I only have God here, but of course we have friends here. But when we are sad, or feel unhappy, for me I always turn to Allah. And in terms of food, it's a bit challenging here. It makes me more careful in terms of choosing food so that I'm aware… not necessarily if it's stated as vegetarian, so that it is okay. The ingredients, whether it contains alcohol, even if there are restaurants here, which sell Malaysian food, I really need to be extra careful. So, I think, that because before this I take it for granted because back in Malaysia, everything is *halal*, it's easy but here, simply to say that we need to be more careful.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

Fina mentioned the importance of being close to Allah (God) when she was sojourning in the UK. For most of the Muslim informants from Malaysia, including Fina, her belief has

been emphasised while she is in the UK. She believed that she was a better Muslim, practising Islam when she is in the UK rather than when she was in Malaysia. During my interview with her, she also shared that certain concerns which were not really an issue when she was in Malaysia, had to be given more detailed consideration, for example the consumption of *halal* meat, looking closely at food which contains alcohol and others. Ingredients, which are acceptable, and in this case, food, should be given more attention and should not be taken for granted they are *halal* for consumption. Based on the challenges being abroad, she had developed her competence in manual skills such as cooking, which she did not have to do much of before because of easy access to halal food. We can see how the presentation of self as a Muslim is more emphasised when international students are in contact with people from different backgrounds, cultures and religious beliefs. This also enhanced their personal practice, as the differences with the others as mentioned previously are much more apparent.

Besides the people around her, while abroad, she had also coped with being abroad by strengthening her relationship with God. As reported in research studies on international students, religious support is reported as one of the important elements to cope with challenges (Astin et al., 2011; Abdullah, 2011). A few students practised their reflexivity in looking for sources, and the advancement of technology in the current world makes it easier for international students abroad to practise their religion. This could be seen from the participants' Facebook posts regarding Islamic teachings and reminders, as well as using other social media as resources.

> (…) because the option is there. It depends if you want it or not. Because in Malaysia I always go to religion classes, but here it's actually is there. For example, my house is near to the mosque, or you can choose to listen to YouTube. It depends on you.
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM)

Other participants recreated the cultural practice that they previously had in their home country in the host country by joining activities and gatherings related to their religion. A few participants regarded these activities as important to ensure that they stay connected to their beliefs, especially when being away from their home country.

> Besides doing PhD and get more knowledge about doing research in the UK, um - I also attended a small discussion among Malaysians, which is what we call - the tadarus - whereby we discuss about the religious things, and in that *tadarus*...

> *tadarus* and - what we call that - ape tu - [36]*tadarus* and [37]*tazkirah*. So, before this maybe in Malaysia, when I working in Malaysia I was so busy -- I would say 24/7 weekdays and weekends - I'll always be at the office and I have less time to do research because I'm very busy with my administration work, with the teaching and learning - and I have - I didn't have more time to attend these kinds of discussion that talk about the religious things - the *tadarus* and the *tazkirah*. When I come to the UK, I'm very happy when we try to devote our time among Malaysian to have these kinds of activities - *tadarus* and the *tazkirah*, to read the Quran and then to discuss about - to share - it's not to discuss - it's just to share content in the Al-Quran and then share with friends and then I feel this is very good and I learnt a lot from these kinds of activities. I learnt a lot about the history of the Quran, about the prophet - everything about Islam here.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

According to Lily, she was too busy to join such activities in Malaysia, and felt that here in the UK she reconnected with Islam. It is also interesting to note that more female participants mentioned joining these activities, this is perhaps due to male participants who are Muslim having more access to activities easily such as the weekly Friday prayers, which is not compulsory for female Muslims. Fina similarly mentioned that she invested more in acquiring faith capital while she is in the UK as compared to Malaysia.

> Spiritually, I think I'm better here (laughs). You know like as a Muslim you have to pray like, five times a day, when I was back home, I don't really follow, I was not really a strict Muslim, so I didn't really follow. But now that I'm here, I know that I'm alone. What I have here with me is my God, I mean apart from other Malaysian friends. I mean the ones who I usually seek for comfort would always be Allah. Indirectly instil the sense of responsibility what I'm supposed to be. I think being away from your home, you have to hold on to something strong. Not something physically strong, but it's actually inside you. Being away, is actually a good experience. 'Cause I tend to know more spiritually, and I tend to practice more.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

[36] the act of reciting Quran together, usually in a mosque during Ramadhan. Source: https://educalingo.com/

[37] brief talk about Islamic religion as a warning: you give a reflection and guidance for life on earth. Source: https://educalingo.com/

Although, overall, the participants felt that people in the host country were understanding and respectful in terms of Islamic obligations that they practised such as prayers and fasting, Mazni felt a few of her officemates were less understanding.

> One thing that I don't understand is when we tell them we want to pray. 'Why do you need to pray? They keep asking me that. We are lucky to have this guy, he is totally knowledgeable; he's the one who explained… he's Italian. Sometimes I'm embarrassed with myself because he knows more about Muslim than me. So he knows the [38]*kiblat*. He said 'I don't mind you pray in the room' (…) But there are a few who would ask me, 'Why do you want to pray?' 'Will your God help you?'
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

Mazni explained that this incident had made her realise that she had to increase her knowledge of religion to be able to better explain it to others who do not share similar cultural values. This intercultural exchange heightened her awareness of her religious identity, something that she had previously taken for granted and, thus, she was able to reflect herself in relation to other people from other backgrounds and countries (Rizvi, 2000). Also, this highlights the different ways that people from different backgrounds cope with their daily challenges (Donnelly, 2002), and for the majority of the participants in the study, through their religious practices.

In contrast, for Qayum, it seems that sometimes it is challenging with his co-nationals.

> I think yes. I think I mean for example like I'm not really sure about culture, we pray like five times a day. So, when I'm here, some people understand, the Malay understand, but if I hang out with Malay who are more liberal than me, so, if I say I want to go pray, and I don't want to hurt their feelings because I know that they don't pray, so, I was like that's okay fine. But I don't want them to look at me like, 'oh so religious!'. But I don't want to have that gap between me and them, alright? But when I have my for example English friends, my lab-mates, some of them know that I always take like five minutes to go and pray, sometimes I go to Friday prayers, so they don't have like big questions.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

[38] The direction of the Kaaba (the sacred building at Mecca), to which Muslims turn at prayer. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

Qayum felt that with his more 'liberal' co-nationals he had to be more cautious of his actions, probably in order to appear more cosmopolitan and acceptable in the host country, he had to appear less religious. However, as he mentioned, this is less an issue with others who are not his co-nationals. This is an interesting observation where Qayum feels more conscious about himself with his 'in-groups' rather than when socialising with his 'out-groups'. When socialising with his more liberal 'in-groups' he felt a need to be self-conscious about praying and presented himself in a religious way if he was socialising with friends who are less 'religious'. This shows the importance of presentation of self even when with his 'in-groups' in terms of religious activities. This also presents complex dynamics in relation to his identity as 'the other' - how he is presenting himself to his English friends was more comfortable in some sense, as opposed to the situation with people in his 'in-group' where he felt he had to present himself in certain 'acceptable' ways. In Goffman's (1959) words, Qayum is managing the impression that others have of him by 'mystifying' or maintaining a distance with the audience in order to keep an idealised performance as someone who is 'cosmopolitan' and, in this event, it is important for him to present his 'ways of belonging' to particular groups he is associating with at a particular time (Glick Schiller, 2004).

Another participant observed that Malay men she met in the UK were more pious than in Malaysia. Although this is only an observation, it merits future study, as a few other participants also mentioned that they felt that they seek to practice Islam more during their sojourn.

> But spiritually, yeah. I also notice that back home, we can simply 'salam' with everyone, with [39]*muhrim* and *non-muhrim*. But, here, when I first got here, when I want to [40]*salam* once, with a Malay guy, he himself refused to *salam* (laughs). So, it tells me that not necessary when you're away, you're not religious. So like now, when I see Malay men, I don't shake hands with them anymore because I learnt from my first day here. They are more religious and pious than the Malays in Malaysia… even though Malaysia is a Muslim country and Islam is the official religion. The Malays here, most of them, they are more strict, they are more religious.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

[39] The close relatives of the opposite sex, detailed by the Koran, whom a Muslim may not marry. A Muslim may not mix freely with any member of the opposite sex outside these prohibited degrees. Source: http://www.encyclo.co.uk/

[40] Malays greet each other with 'Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh', meaning "May the peace, the blessings and the mercy of Allah be upon you." The salam is often also accompanied by a handshake. Source: http://conversational-malay.weebly.com/

In another example, Fina felt that her religious practice increased during her sojourn. In Fina's words, *"… not necessary when you're away, you're not religious"*, shows that although being away from her homeland, she still portrays her 'ways of belonging' to her culture. Besides that, from her observation, other Malays in the UK are more religious. According to Levitt and Jaworsky (2007, p. 140), "religion and culture often go hand in hand, carrying and reinforcing one another". Besides interactions with other Muslims during their sojourn, religious presentation of Muslim women by wearing hijab or shawls plays a significant role in the participants' daily experiences as sojourners in the UK. For Mazni, she felt that this somehow restricted others around her, especially men from the host country and other international students, to approach her in social interactions. The findings also agree with Holloway's (2012) study where the significance of gender and religion plays an important role for the participants in the study in terms of cultural capital accumulation.

> One thing *yang* [which] I realised the international guys is that they won't speak with us unless we speak with them first. But I *pernah tanya* [asked] my friend why they are quite afraid to approach us. One thing is because we are wearing *tudung* [hijab], but they *tahu budaya Arab* [know Arab's culture] is like Muslim people are not allowed to speak with other people. So, they're thinking that we are like that. *Tapi* [But] maybe because Malaysian is not particular about *benda tu* [those things]... kite boleh je cakap kan [we can just talk, right]? Sometimes, most of the time, *kite yang kena* approach *die orang dulu* [we have to approach them first] then *baru die orang boleh* communicate [only then they can communicate]. If not, die orang buat tatau je [they would just ignore].
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

Mazni perceived that her tudung, or shawl, which represents her identity as a Muslim woman is associated in the UK with the culture of Arab people, which is significantly different from Malaysia. In another example in social interaction, Siti felt that by wearing the hijab she was perceived as 'angelic' by her colleagues.

> People (her colleagues) here are sensitive when I swear. So, if I swear, it's not okay, but if they swear it's okay. For example, when I dropped something. Like, shit. Ohhh Liyana, you're swearing. (…) I think it has to do with Islam and hijab *kut* [maybe]... *They nampak kita* [They see us] Islam, they *nampak kite pakai tudung, so die rasa kite baik* [They see us wearing hijab, so they think we are nice]. Which is kinda ashamed actually...I mean patut nya kita tak swear kan?

> But if there's a lot of Malaysian people especially Islam… women *yang* [who] swear in Malaysia and I would say 'shit' *tu macam kecik je* [it's just a minor] level. A lot of people would swear really bad words, worse than me. (…) It's funny. Not funny, it's peculiar *la* that thing. So, in a way I don't swear anymore *kat sini* [here].
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

As narrated above by Siti, her experience on 'swearing' in Malaysia and in the UK was perceived differently. Something that she felt was 'normal' in Malaysia, made her more aware of her identity as a Muslim woman in the UK. Besides that, she felt that she had to present herself in a different light and stop swearing as she is also representing herself, but also her religious identity wherever she goes. She went on to exemplify where she could be a 'model' as a Muslim here:

> I have a friend who's very interested in Islam, but he's an atheist, and he tells me why he's not in Islam… in a way *macam die tanya macam kenapa kite sembelih lembu, bagi die die tak boleh terima* [like, he asked me why do we have to sacrifice cows; he could not accept that]. *Bagi die benda tu kejam* [He thought that is cruel]. And if we don't know how to explain that, *takleh convince die, makna nya Islam tak cukup kuat bagi die* [could not convince him, that means Islam is not strong enough for him]. *And bile die tengok akhlak kite tak baik, die rase die hilang kepercayaan pada agama tu* [when he sees our bad morals, he would lose his belief in the religion]. So, that makes me reflect in a lot of ways.
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

As Siti narrated above—this echoed Fina's point earlier where they perceived learning and practicing more about Islam in a new country compared to when they were in Malaysia. In this case, Siti perceived that she would have to learn more of her religion to be able to explain to a particular officemate about Islam—that could previously be accepted as it is and taken for granted. This heightened her awareness and also knowledge so that she would be able to be a reference to her friends (besides what is portrayed in the media) who were curious about her beliefs. In this example, international students introduced to their institutional space 'the value of diversity' (Smith, 2007). Therefore, study abroad not only affects the international students, it also increases the local community's cultural awareness as well.

Besides social interaction with others in the host country, the hijab as an identification as a Muslim also could sometimes cause fear for the female Muslim sojourners. Ahmad

expressed his worry for his wife as a Muslim woman in the UK for wearing the hijab. Despite not having experienced it yet, he was still cautious of her safety.

> (…) of course for example my wife, I think, female Muslim, she's been wearing the hijab, but luckily for us in [Anonymised] city, people are very open. There is almost zero, almost zero, I think, any mentions about Islamophobic things, so, I think, that I went very well.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

> Religion is important despite my location. I mean, even though you are travelling in the Arctic, you still have to adhere to Islamic rules and regulations. You still have to perform prayers five times a day, you have to fast during Ramadhan and being a Muslim is like 24 hours, it's not according to your location. It's much more apparent because I'm a Muslim woman with the hijab. Compared to my husband people cannot guess what his *deen*… what his religion is… but people know that I'm a Muslim… because we know that a Muslim woman wears the hijab (…) So, yeah people know my religion, based on my physical appearance.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

As narrated by Saleha, her Islamic belief transcends geographical borders. Although she was aware of her identity as a Muslim woman by wearing the hijab, that is not considered as a deterrent to practice her belief religiously despite her location. Her point that her husband would be less likely be associated with Islam also suggests that, for Muslims, an individual's gender also could affect their experiences during their sojourn. However, other participants did not experience any 'micro aggressions'[41] due to their religious affiliations as reported in previous studies (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli and Lopez, 2007; Stevenson, 2014) except for Mazni.

> Sometimes I feel afraid. The way people interact with us, the way they protect us, I feel comfortable. But at the same time, I feel afraid. One time there was an incident in Paris, that made me feel afraid to live in the UK because we were harassed in Morrison's (local supermarket) and no one protected us. Everyone just ignored what happened. There were Morrison's workers, but they didn't help us. A few teenagers threw things at us, and the workers just watched… they didn't take any action. Is it because we are Muslim? I was so afraid then to stay in the UK. I feel it's better to stay in Malaysia.
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

[41] see discussion 3.3.5

Although what was experienced by Mazni was an isolated case from other narratives in the study, it does not mean that such incidents do not take place. Such incidents could affect their safety and sense of belonging during their sojourn.

> (…) initially when I was here, because the toilet is not so… we have to keep the toilet dry… because I want to take *wuduk*[42]… so it's like habis basah kan and everything... so, that one is a challenge for me, I think. But as time goes by, I think I'm getting better I can adapt with that.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Besides the experiences that the participants shared during the interview sessions above, a female participant, Kirin, posted on her Facebook how she experienced micro aggressions due to her appearance wearing the hijab during her sojourn. This also further indicated that such incidents were perceived as sensitive and unpleasant topics to be discussed. The data also indicated that female participants were seemingly more open to discuss about their experiences as Muslims in the host country compared to men – at least to me.

Although the participants accounted the challenges in terms of practicing their beliefs (Islam) in the UK, they accept this positively as the challenge to be more creative with using technology. Despite feeling a sense of 'loss' in terms of the sense of security that their homeland is able to offer with facilities, for example, the participants have become more creative in using the resources around them. The easy accessibility has also had a positive result for the majority of the participants, whereby they seek more ways in order to continue practicing their religious beliefs, which also suggests that the participants seek opportunities to acquire faith capital in the host country due to experiencing this loss. Also, the experiences of the participants illustrated that this could be gendered, due to the appearance of Muslim women in the hijab. This, as presented in the data, showed in many ways how this could affect their social interactions as well as sense of belonging in the host country. Similarly, in Stevenson's (2014) study, it was found that students could experience exclusion and isolation due to their religious beliefs. In short, the participants narrated the contemporary ways as to how modern transnational Muslims lived their lives away from their homeland, and how they renegotiate their previous habitus based on their experiences in the host country. The findings also agree with Holloway's (2012) study where significance of gender and

[42] Ritual washing to be performed in preparation for prayer and worship. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

religion play an important role for the participants in the study in terms of cultural capital accumulation[43].

6.5 Conclusion to the Chapter

In conclusion, Chapter 6 presents the participants' transnational living experiences in terms of language, culture, and religion. The participants, as illustrated in the chapter, are constantly renegotiating their identities and habitus while accumulating capital, and pulling cultural and other resources from home and host countries, which are useful to them during their sojourn (Levitt, 2011). These narratives mirror their ways of belonging to the host cultures (to some extent) by demonstrating their transformed ways of dispositions and behaviours through social and academic contexts prominently. In many ways, as demonstrated in the findings of this chapter, the participants' experiences show a range of nuances due to intersectionality with other aspects of their identities.

[43] see Chapter 3 page 59

Chapter 7

Learning, Social Network and Maintaining Social Ties

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the participants' experiences in relation to language, culture and religion, through a transnational lens (Vertovec, 2009) where the participants experienced changes of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) based on their lived experiences during their sojourn. This chapter will continue to explore the participants' micro-level experiences in terms of their learning experiences as PhD students, their social networks and how they maintain transnational social ties today's contemporary world.

7.2 Learning and Supervision

As discussed in Chapter Five, the majority of the participants articulated their desire for sojourn in the UK in terms of accumulating various forms of capital. *'Working with experts'*, *'I read a lot of his/her works'*, and '*famous in the field'* are quoted as motivations for the participants in pursuing their doctoral studies under their supervisors. More often, these words came from participants in STEM fields than SSH fields. This section is going to explore the participants' learning experiences once they had actually arrived in the UK, and how and in what ways their habitus may or may not have changed during the process.

7.2.1 Independence

One of the most dominant themes connected to becoming a PhD student as articulated by the majority of the participants in the study was the sense of independence experienced as a researcher. Independence in this sense refers to the participants' schedule, working area and topics or subject matter. The majority of the participants indicated a distinct disparity in terms of learning experience between home and host countries, which was also felt as a form of cultural 'translocation' from one culture to another. However, in terms of research projects, participants from STEM fields articulated less freedom with the matter as compared to participants from SSH fields. In terms of conducting research, the majority of the participants were almost shocked with the amount of freedom that they had with their research projects, several of who

felt contrasted with what they were used to back in their home country. In this sense, the majority of the participants felt a cultural shift, especially in relation to independence.

During the interviews, the majority of participants articulated a sense of contrasting learning and teaching cultures between the 'East' and 'West', especially in terms of supervision (Goode, 2007), highlighting the ways in which participants constructed these regions and placed them in contrast with each other. Hanah described her experience as follows:

> I mean the main challenge for me as a PhD student will be - work independently. Actually in the UK, I mean the western culture, they encourage independent researcher... but I find it very hard to do so. Maybe because we're used to the Malaysian culture - we have someone to guide us so properly - sometimes even tell us what to do.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

From Hanah's perspective, as she mentioned, the 'western culture' promotes a more 'independent' approach in training doctoral students as compared to her home country. This was perhaps implied by her experience doing a smaller scale research for her previous degree. A majority of the participants in the study articulated similarly that the degree of independence expected of them contrasted significantly with the academic culture of their home country. In relation to independence, another participant, Walid, highlights the distinction of 'doing research'.

> I think the biggest challenge with me would be the work management in terms of the independence. At home like I said it's always very spoon-fed in a way. So, you are told what you need to know, and that's all being examined and that becomes a very easy structure to work with but that's not a very good structure to work outside of the study background because here when you're doing research, it's you look beyond what is taught and there's an expectation here (…) And to be able to set the time and discipline to do every individual bits that needs to be done.
>
> (Walid, Male, STEM)

As narrated by Walid above, it was implied that the learning culture in the home country is more 'spoon-fed' in contrast to the emphasis on 'independence' in the host country in research training (Goode, 2007). Walid also mentioned about the contrasting

approach of doing research and “there’s an expectation here”. Although Walid did not elaborate more on this, it implied that perhaps there is a certain standard in research to be able to make a contribution to existing knowledge, and the ‘expectation’ is higher here in the UK, which also suggests the need to ‘prove’ himself to his institution here, especially as a novice researcher (Archer, 2008). This highlights the transnational learning experiences in terms of doing research and the expectations from academia in the UK and back home for the majority of the participants.

In contrast, a few students, for example Saleha, perceived the independence aspect positively:

> (…) the tertiary education where I think I get more freedom here. The flexibility of the time... I supposed graduate students you don't have to stick with punch in and punch out system, which I think that one may cause stress to some people. I love flexibility here… So, I think that's the difference…
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Based on Saleha’s narrative above, she appreciated the freedom, especially the flexibility in terms of working hours. This could also be due to Saleha being a mother while doing her PhD, which would benefit her in managing her other responsibilities.

However, independence can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation for some research students.

> I find that not only because I'm studying, but also because you're aging in a way and you're becoming like an adult that you realised that here there tend to be more a sense of independence, and I find home it's a very social group where because you have friends, you have family and the way the work place environment operates at home where it's a very social thing whereas here I tend to find maybe in research it's very individual based. You don't need to communicate with people if you don't want to.
>
> (Walid, Male, STEM)

Walid, for example, narrated how the different spaces almost give them different social persona. For example, back in Malaysia, Walid was more social due to having an existing social network. However, being in the UK, he had to recreate a new social network, but due to his work demands (which he also described as more ‘individual-based’), he implied that he could choose to socialise or otherwise.

Similarly, Qayum expressed his preference to isolate himself from others.

> (…) but here, I don't mind about friends because I have my own things to do. Sometimes I don't have time for myself. So, if I don't have friends here, I don't have problems. All I want to do is sit down at somewhere quiet, coffee, just to relax. But back in Malaysia, we don't have friends, then that's something bad. Because you need to go out with friends, you know, because otherwise that's bad. But here I just don't care.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

According to Qayum, he also enjoyed his isolation from others. It could be suggested from the narratives that the participants indicated aspiration for 'imagined' social capital[44] by socialising with the local community; however, due to other responsibilities especially as research students, they unconsciously chose not to.

Next, Faliq shared his experience of doing experiments and compared his experiences in Malaysia and in the UK. The way of thinking, ideas, and reasoning are aspects that differentiate between his experiences between the UK and Malaysia.

> The expertise here… the way they think, reasoning… the way they present the data… it's powerful, actually. Like, in Malaysia, we have a lot of equipment, a lot of technology, actually … in fact, more advanced. Like, in my institute, but there's no projects (in Malaysia). So, there's no projects to create, thus, ideas and thinking are less. Here, for instance, there's the technology, just normal… but the way of thinking! For example, I got a bad result to my supervisor… Even though it's a bad result, but he has a second theory behind it. Okay, maybe this is not a bad result after all! Maybe this turns out to be a good result… the way he thinks… he's always positive thinking. So, and then, he trusts you… he trusts your results. So, like, there's a few experience (back in Malaysia), like, he didn't believe it, like, we do it 3-4 times, right. Like, here, we do it once, okay… this is good. Sometimes he trusts the results, so he just proceeds to the next future plans. Like in Malaysia, they will just stop there. So, here, it's always forward thinking lah. They always trust your results.
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM)

Based on the narrative above, Faliq highlights a distinction between westerners as 'they' and 'we' as Malaysians. Also, as narrated above, 'trust' and positive thinking are

[44] see Quinn (2005)

perhaps part of the 'western' culture that he respects and wishes Malaysians back home could adopt, in terms of research. He mentioned about being trusted with his experiment results, which could lead to further research, in comparison with his experience in Malaysia where he would have to repeat his experiments and not move forward, which could benefit researchers if these experiments involved time. What Faliq narrated, thus, also highlights his shifting habitus especially in terms of 'thinking' towards research due to his sojourn in the UK.

Another discourse based on the participants' narratives on their doctoral journey is 'the transitioning process', especially to participants who had left academic institutions for a while. Fourteen participants had previously worked in various fields prior to their sojourn (see Appendix 1). For several of the participants who are married, their research training is challenging in terms of transitioning to become students from previous other roles associated with work and family matters.

For example, for Alif, one of the challenges that he was going through would be the transition from working to becoming a student while performing his roles as a husband and father.

> (…) but of course you have to make sure that your kids are also enjoying while they are here and, uh, the difficult part will be, uh, to - because now I'm studying a PhD level - so, the difficulty is to actually - because I'm working last time, I'm a working person, so, when you now as a student, so you have to change your lifestyle... you have to change your, uh, your working style, your life style, everything… because as a student - it's like going back to school, you know? For working people like me… so you need to really adjust your time, adjust your schedule, because you have to read books a lot - compared to my previous work whereby I just have to go to work and that's it.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

Similarly, Fina expressed her difficulty in conducting research due to leaving academia before pursuing her PhD. However, she described this as attributed to her lack of experience in research.

> (…) when I first got here, I don't have any research background. I haven't done any dissertation before, so that is actually a challenge. It's very hard for me to read correctly… I read novels, not academic journals. So you think, read, speak differently. Yeah. That's my biggest challenge. I have to understand research.

> What is methodology, what is all that. Even though I have worked for over 20 years. I don't see how that helps me. Maybe, in terms of socialising, yes. I'm more confident. In terms of study, I'm still very green.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

According to Fina, she had a lot to learn regarding research, and she implied that her previous Master's degree was by coursework, which suggested her lack of experience in conducting research. From her narrative, this highlights the importance of pre-requisite research training before embarking a PhD degree. However, she mentioned that her working experience benefited her in terms of socialising in the host country.

Besides the participants' experience in transitioning to their roles as PhD students, Alif further elaborated his experiences on his PhD journey as a 'mental challenge':

> There's positive and negative situations. Positive is even though when you encounter a challenge in your PhD, but, positively, you can actually spend more time with your family - more than when I was in Malaysia. Because over here, the time is very flexible - doing PhD - so, you can actually have more time on yourself for example. So it's good in that sense. In a negative way, it changed you into a different person sometimes. Yeah because - but sometimes it's good. Because the routine part, you know - the routine. Because before this you are very positive, for example - but now because of the challenge, you feel very negative. You become a very negative person. You become so demotivated sometimes as compared to when I'm working – even though they have a lot of problems, but the motivation as high as doing PhD. So, you feel so down, you feel so demotivated, you feel like the world is gonna end - I mean it's different. The mental challenge. Yeah, so that's the negative part of pursuing a PhD. But there's also the positive side of it.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

One of the advantages of being a PhD student for Alif would be having more flexible working time, which was previously fixed when he was in Malaysia. This gave him more time to spend with his family. However, the transition to become a student and balancing his new routine and responsibilities at time could be a challenge.

7.2.2 Teaching experiences

Besides learning and supervision experience, several of the participants (5/27) also shared experiences as graduate teaching assistants (GTA) during their doctoral training. The participants who had opportunities to become GTAs overall valued their experiences during their tenure. Besides gaining teaching experience, and valuable to their professional development, they were also paid for the position. For Fina in particular, this was her initial motivation.

> For every PhD student, you have to teach as part of your training and development, so if your supervisor allows you to teach, recommend you to the college, so in my case, so the reason for me was if I can teach, I can get extra money. That was my priority, but since I started teaching, I know the kind of money that they pay is very little compared to the time and energy that you have to spend preparing yourself to teach. Even though at class your task is just to monitor the students, moderate the discussion on case studies, but you must also remember what is the case study about. So as much as you teach, you are also learning from the students. So, that's what I told my students. Because like I don't have any teaching experience, so as I teach, I learn. I'm teaching master's students. And I sat for the paper before, but it was a few years back. But the way they approach the question and answers are different. The way they discuss here is more critical. At the same time as a teacher you just throw questions and let them think and at the end, recap what you have learnt. The group I was teaching is a group of international students so I have to speak in English for one hour straight once a week. But the classes have ended… I have completed 5 tutorials. But it was a very good experience and exposure. So far I don't have any problems, coz they speak in English as well. Majority are from China, so they are like Malaysian…very quiet and timid… so you just have to push them in the right direction. So you just have to tackle them differently.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

Besides the capital accumulation through her GTA experience, what she described could also be perceived as a shift of perception in terms of how learning is not only from the teacher, but is a two-way process—the teacher learns from the students. She also stressed the different learning approach between Malaysia and the UK where she mentioned, "*…the way they discuss here is more critical*". This could suggest the distinction between here and there, as she previously experienced in her home country and in the UK. Fina also mentioned that the majority of her students were from China

and suggested similar characteristics with Malaysian students as being *"quiet and timid"*. However, she implied that she tried to be creative with her teaching approach in encouraging her students' participation as how a typical western classroom would be, which implied that 'west is best' as compared to what is normally experienced in Asian classrooms. From Fina's narrative, she inferred that her GTA experience had shifted her teaching and learning approach from a teacher-centred learning to a more student-centred learning style in UK classrooms.

Where Fina adopted what she described as a more 'westernised' approach to teaching to adapt with her new environment, in contrast, Wahida demonstrated a more authoritative approach in her classroom in which she maintained her previous habitus despite her new environment.

> I like to be very frank with my students, you know - especially when it comes to the feedback sheet - I'd like to say—'you know, your work is not up to standard', 'why are you doing this?' 'I don't understand what you are writing about'. 'What are you thinking?' - you know, I like to be straight forward. But I was told by the module leader, because when we cross-mark, she told me don't do that - although you meant it well, 'over here, you have to soften it, you know'? 'You have to say perhaps… next time… you have to be careful with what you write… the referencing must follow the Harvard convention...' You know, things like that? They tend to be more diplomatic in terms of language, I would say - I'm still learning from it, but I still think it's a waste of time. (laughs)
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH)

Although the example above is on writing feedback, in her interview, she implied that she adopted the same style in the classroom, which she felt was more direct. Despite her colleague's advice to adopt a subtler approach to correcting mistakes, she felt that it is better to be more direct with her students. In transnational terms, this also highlights the distinction between 'here and there' (Vertovec, 2009) for Wahida, when the module leader emphasised changing her approach and how things are done differently 'over here'. From the narrative above, although it is implied that she is still learning and suggested adopting the approach, she also indicated her resistance and desire to maintain the more authoritative approach she was used to back home. This highlights the difference between the perceptions towards how teaching and learning should be and how, in this case, Wahida has to change her approach in order to accommodate styles that are more encouraged in the UK, or 'over here'.

While, the two examples, above, came from GTAs in SSH where they worked in classrooms, GTAs in STEM fields shared their experiences in labs as demonstrators to undergraduate students. From their narratives, the participants indicated that their identities as international students, and perhaps their ethnicity and gender influenced their teaching experiences.

Mazni, for example, talked about her experience working with students from diverse backgrounds.

> There are three groups in the lab. The first group consists of European students and the second group are mostly Chinese and Iranian and the third one is mixed. So, mostly I'm involved with group one and group two. But for group two, there are many Chinese students, so it's easy for us to speak because they do not understand what Sam is saying because he's a typical English. They prefer to ask me. (…) But then for group one, they are all guys and European, they prefer to have Sam to do the experiments.
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

As Mazni described, she perceived that it was easier for her to work with Chinese students, and the students felt the same way due to similar English language backgrounds. Similarly, European students, as she mentioned, preferred to work with another demonstrator, Sam, due to him being English. It is also implied that perhaps this is due to students in the group being male students.

Another participant, Hamid, explained how his position as a GTA gave a 'meaning' to his PhD journey.

> Hamid: So in my second year, I have a role that - I was a demonstrator. So, I need to be—for first year lab, so it's three hours' lab per week. So, I need to show them how to do some experiments. (…) when you do the experiments, you need to explain why these things are not working, why this thing is not working… and all those things. So, like, that thing… like, I don't know why, but I like it when you have a commitment, I think you're like doing a PhD.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you feel so?
>
> Hamid: Because… it's how you can share your knowledge with others. And then because you already did that and then why not contribute to the school as

> well. And then I also try to improvise some experiments. And then at the same time it's networking. Networking with my lecturers, so that I know that people who's working with students, who's working with whom and also I know other PhD students from another area and we also share problems and all those things.
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM)

In contrast to Fina and Wahida's motivation for their GTA position, which is monetary, Hamid felt that the 'commitment' as a GTA gave more meaning to his PhD. He described this by not only sharing knowledge with others, but also a way to acquire social capital through networking with other lecturers and PhD students from other fields. Besides that, he also felt through building rapport with other PhD students, he gained support from his peers who were going through similar journeys.

Although Hamid perceived that overall his experience as a GTA benefited him in many ways, he revealed that he had a rocky start with his students. This was due to discrepancies of lab reports he marked.

> (…) I did some marking for report. So, that's the first thing that I found it's quite difficult. Because all of them are English students. So, I know my level, I know where my English level is so sometimes when I mark something wrong - because of my carelessness because I don't understand the word I need to explain why **(…)** because you know the English... most students - are outspoken - why?—why is this wrong? **(…)** So, I need to explain to them - the correct way - because there is a scientific way of writing. (…) I still managed to explain and then to help them and then they even gave me cakes and add me on Facebook (laughs).

From the narrative above, Hamid mentioned that he felt inferior in relation to his English language proficiency when supervising his English students. He also gave an example of his experience being confronted by his students, which is strange to him as students 'here' are more outspoken. Here we could see the complexity of the power dynamics where Hamid should be in a greater position of power/authority than his students—both in the UK and back home. However, a number of things challenge the expectation that Hamid would have greater power/authority in relation to his students. First, the power differential between teacher and student is not as strong/formal in the UK. This is due to contemporary discourses such as the 'student as consumer', which entails consumer rights and expectations. Secondly, his language proficiency made Hamid feel inferior/less in position of greater knowledge compared to his students. Finally, the post-colonial 'status' of English as a language exacerbates things; it is even

more important for a teacher to be proficient in English due to the status of English (see Section 3.3.3.2). However, over time, Hamid mentioned that he gained more confidence in his English language use as well as working with his students, where they achieved good rapport.

From the participants' experiences as GTAs, as explored in this section, it could be suggested how all the participants gained beneficial experience through their positions, and how this experience has renegotiated their identities not only as instructors, but also instructors in the host country by adopting what they perceived as a 'western' approach to teaching styles. Also, of all the participants, Mazni and Hamid illustrated how their identities as second language users of English affected their GTA experience, albeit perhaps at the initial stage. In Hamid's case in particular, there is a power issue in terms of language where it is suggested that he felt 'inferior' to home students due to language and identity as a second language user of the English language.

7.3 Relationship with supervisors

In terms of supervision, overall, the participants indicated positive experiences. Besides moving to become more independent and have a 'take charge' attitude with their research projects, when discussing their experiences here (host country), they often relate to what they have experienced there (home country). This highlights that the sojourners' transnational experiences are affected by the simultaneity of socio-cultural experiences of both their host and home countries (Vertovec, 2009). The most prominent discourse when discussing about learning and supervision experiences would probably be how the participants experienced power relations with their lecturers or supervisors back in Malaysia and now in the UK.

As we encountered in the previous situation in relation to Hamid and his undergraduate students, the participants also commented on the ways in which their own power relationships with their supervisors were different to what they expected.

> I think in terms of power relations… In Malaysia, like lecturers are kind of very high position, but in [anonymised city], I'm not saying in other places, but based on my experience, lecturers, tutors, or other officers they kind of interact like as if we are in the same level even though they have more knowledge, but they are very humble and acknowledge that knowledge is wide, and it's not that when they become a lecturer or officer, the title they can use to show their authority to others.

(Leah, Female, SSH)

Leah's narrative concerning her previous experience regarding power distance between students and lecturers in Malaysia is apparent. Bourdieu (1988) describes (in relation to French universities) that the lecturer traditionally has a very high degree of power (and therefore 'legitimacy' to speak) in relation to the student. However, these power relations tend to be presented less overtly in UK universities in the present day (Leathwood and Read, 2009). Thus, Leah was surprised when in her current institution the students and lecturers are considered as equal members in producing knowledge. A few other students from the study also echoed her thoughts on the matter.

> I would say here in European people they don't really have a gap between with certain people of certain status they don't have the gap they just talk normally like friends. But I still have those… when people are talking with their supervisors, they spoke like they speak with their friends... there's no politeness in that. 'hey how are you, let's go have a cup of coffee' just like that and I still can't do that because grew up in the Malaysian culture, it's really hard to do that even if I try to do that it's really hard so, um, I would say my friends they can adapt to that because most of my friends are European and they can easily adapt to that, but I can't adapt to that kind of politeness thing they don't have that politeness during no, between the people of different status. But I do still have that.
>
> (Wahida, Female, STEM)

> (…) and we're like we… because they are laid-back. So, they are not like putting too much pressure on me. So, I'm the one who has to chase after them. So, usually we meet like multiple times per week. Just to say hi! or whatever. (laughs)
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

> If I speak to a supervisor or lecturer in Malaysia, it would be more formal. But if I speak with a lecturer here or supervisor, it would be more informal. So, for example in Malaysia I would call them Doctor or else they would be offended. Here, you call them by their name. You can have coffee with them (…) I don't think you can have that in Malaysia lah, where a lecturer *ajak* you *minum kopi*

> *[coffee], teh tarik*[45]*... jarang lah, macam tu* [invited you for coffee, teh tarik… that's rare].
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM)

For Maria, one of the things that she observed in the UK is the relationships and boundaries that the students have with their supervisors. From what she shared, a close relationship between the two is not really the norm in Malaysia especially in informal settings. However, in the UK, it is something that is being practised and it is not really out of the norm. She believed that this is one of the things that differentiates between the cultures in Malaysia and the UK. Another practice that she mentioned that she felt quite foreign is calling supervisors and other superiors by their first names. Again, to Maria, coming from a traditional Asian background, this is odd and could indicate a sense of disrespect. As she mentioned, this is not something that she was used to when she was back in Malaysia. In terms of power relation here, this would somehow 'break the wall' in terms of power relations between the students and supervisors. Instead of fearing the supervisors because of their position, these everyday activities of going out for drinks with their supervisors would ease the students. The effect of such a gesture and practice would probably lead to much more comfortable communication with their 'superiors'.

In contrast, for Lisa and Alif, who are considered as the more mature and experienced in this study in terms of age and mobility, they experienced less power distance with their advisers.

> I had good relationship with my former lecturers in UoI as well. Ahh… they see me as somebody of the same stature rather than looking down at me. So, I had no problems with my lecturers in [Anonymised University]. Over here, it's the same thing as well. We argue all the time. You should see when I have my supervisory meeting, I'll tell them why? Personally, I don't see that thing here, that thing that people say, but I also see. People say that in Malaysia that lecturers are always right and you know as a student you cannot be right and that you know the lecturers are more superior. And as students you stay there, you don't say anything.
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

[45] hot milk tea

> (…) maybe because I'm a working man… so, the way - so, it's like a professional relationship. So, the communication is more professional rather than if you are master's or/and undergraduate students. So - like doing PhD, they know that you are working man - so, different communication level. Now, it's like a professional level. It's not like a student and supervisor level.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

Lisa experienced less power distance with her supervisors as the relationships and knowledge that they had was believed to be co-constructed. The students were older and had more working experience, and also seemed to demonstrate more confidence discussing their projects with their supervisors. This is probably due to their previous life experiences in which they had established their professional identities. This shows that Lisa and Alif have the cultural capital of experience in these jobs that give legitimacy to a professional identity that, in turn, arguably gives them greater status within the student-supervisor relationship.

While the majority of participants in the study indicated that they embraced the new culture in terms of relationships with their supervisors, others portrayed some resistance. In Hana's case, for example, she adapted to the new culture, despite uneasiness.

> Yes, of course with supervisors... I think... Yes, I'm not that casual in terms of no joking around with them... I'm usually very - I feel that they are very serious. So I'm going to maintain that tone with them as well. So - usually I don't really joke with them or sometimes they joke with me - but I don't know how to respond… I feel awkward (laughs).
>
> (Hana, Female, SSH)

From her narration, she identified herself in the relationship as student-mentor, which is normal in the Asian culture (Myles and Cheng, 2003). For Hana, she felt more comfortable talking about research-related matters rather than casual conversations.

> Interviewer: Do you address them with their titles?
>
> Hana: No... no… because they asked me not to do so. At first when I came here, I actually address them with Prof... and they said, no, no just call me based on the first name; so, eventually I called them by their first names until today. And they are very nice.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Hana: At first I don't feel good... even until now I don't feel good - I actually feel rude. I still feel rude to call them based on their first name. But - I think that if they are comfortable with that, I'm going along with them because most importantly in communication, we have to make them feel comfortable - if they are at ease, so I'm just going to get along with them - because they requested me to do so - so, I'm just going to follow unless they asked me to call them, you know, based on the titles, then I'm going to do so.

(Hanah, Female, SSH)

From her response, Hana demonstrated a typical response by an Asian student in which they would likely feel less comfortable addressing someone with a higher status by name and dropping their titles. This shows the power struggles of the language and the meaning to the interactions, for example, in this case Hana with her supervisors. Despite reassurance from her supervisor, the previous Asian background that she was brought up with often tussles with current experiences. Her identity as a student is challenged with new experiences and roles that she has and this can be very conflicting. This observation is similar to the findings in Myles and Cheng (2003), where the more informal relationships between supervisors and students could be 'disorienting' to international students.

Another participant, Sarah, felt that she had to find a balance between the Asian-western cultures and insist on a 'barrier'.

Sarah: For my supervisor, because she is from Asian country, more or less she has the same accent and the way she talks is the same with what we're used to speak. So… it's not really hard.

Interviewer: So, you're more formal with your supervisors?

Sarah: Yeah... because I want to create that barrier, I don't want to treat her like - it's good to treat her like your friend, but sometimes - it depends on the situation. When you speak something serious - about the work, so - be professional. But if you go out with her, you know, some restaurant to eat something, so, yes, you can be a like a friend - talk like a friend with her. I think she is a very good supervisor because she knows how to reduce the stress for us -

> just to stay at the lab and do the PhD work... sometimes she organised like mushroom hunting - so we go out together, like a day trip, and after we picked the mushrooms, we go to her house and cook together. So, she try to be - not to give really big barrier between - between her and us as students. I think that's a good approach as a supervisor to be with the students. So that the students - they still respect - for me, I still respect my supervisor, but at the same time, you know, I can be friends with her.
>
> (Sarah,Female, STEM)

For Sarah, she attributed her supervisor's similar Asian background and speaking style, and accent as lessening the communication barrier. Activities such as mushroom picking, as she mentioned, created a non-threatening atmosphere between the students and lessened the power distance. This certainly promotes a positive environment and rapport for both parties.

The narratives in this section demonstrate how the participants renegotiated their habitus in relation to what they previously experienced in their home country and now in the host country by drawing on their transnational experiences (Vertovec, 2009). While the majority of the participants adapted to the new culture, others adapted but portrayed some resistance (as demonstrated by Sarah and Hanah). The participants' age and working experience perhaps influences the dynamics of the relationships as well, as demonstrated by Lisa and Alif where they displayed arguably more balanced, co-constructed relationships with their supervisors.

7.4 Social Network and Maintaining Social Ties

Fostering relationships with others in higher education is important to ensure smooth transition in the host country (Wilcox et al., 2005). During the interviews, the participants discussed the significance of their social networks, and how they maintain social ties during their sojourn[46]. The table[47] illustrates the participants' social networks during their sojourn as mapped by the participants during their interview sessions.

7.4.1 Co-nationals

For the majority of the participants, having other co-nationals is important to maintain their home country's cultural identity. According to previous research studies, several

[46] See section 4.3.1
[47] Refer to Appendix 3

benefits of fostering relationships with other co-nationals in the host country include providing support to help maintain and express their cultures, as well as to explore new cultures together (Bochner, 1977; Woolf, 2007; Maundeni, 2001). Many of the Muslim participants expressed their delight especially for gatherings during festive seasons such as during Ramadhan and Eid. These celebrations were important for the participants to meet and socialise with each other, and these occasions also provide comfortable spaces for them to become 'reacquainted' with common aspects of their 'home' cultures through familiar food and clothing during these events. Being away from their home country, these shared practices provided the participants with a sense of belonging and comfort.

> *Woke up at 2 am and feeling hungry. Just had some rice & chicken curry, complimentary from a student's wife yesterday. Such a Malaysian hospitality! #Alhamdulillah*
>
> *(Fina, Female, SSH, SU)*

Leah's narrative echoes the findings from previous research of how other co-nationals helped her in her transitional period during her early days in the host country.

> I lost weight maybe because I was stressed, I cannot sleep because I miss Malaysia so much, and I am the youngest child in my family. Maybe that's the factor. When I told my Malay friend, she said that everyone has a problem, so you need to cope with it. But she's staying with other Malaysians. Of course she would not have issues like me. Because that's my first time in a foreign land, with foreign people, with a foreign language. What do they expect from me? It's the biggest challenge in my life and after ten months, because I started my studies in September. And I return to Malaysia in June and told my supervisor I want to start my research in Penang first because I don't think I can handle… I don't think that is a culture shock, right?
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH)

Leah's discussion above is an example how many of the informants feel that it is important to stay close with people from their home country, and how this familiarity could avoid homesickness and loneliness. This also suggests how Malaysian international students at times feel that it is one of the ways to cope with homesickness and 'culture shock'. This also, although not directly, showed how the community that she prefers to have more contact with would be Malaysian students in the UK compared to other nationalities. From this narrative, it is suggested that

Leah's preference affected her chances and probability of using the English language beyond academic matters. From her narrative we could also see how this could be affecting her emotionally and physically as well. This suggests that her social relationships played an important role in her adjustment being abroad (Wilcox et al., 2005).

In addition, being around others from the same culture during sojourn also seemed to help the sojourners maintain their cultural values (Maundeni, 2001). In Hanah's narrative for instance, she suggested the importance for having co-nationals in the host country.

> What I can see that - I think it is good because we are not, um, living in isolation *kan* (right)? We have to have a community... because it will be our identity and unless you can build your own identity, I don't think so it will be very easy for us. I mean unless we are born and raised here. So, you will have a better - I mean Scottish identity... but we are not. We just came here for study. So, I think it's very important for us to have a Malaysian community.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

From her narrative, she mentioned that by having a community with similar identity and cultural values, this would avoid feelings of loneliness and isolation. In a new environment, it is important for international students to have a community that shares the same cultures, language and other elements that are familiar for that sense of belonging (Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Woolf, 2007; Maundeni, 2001). However, too much attachment to other co-nationals would also be detrimental to the sojourners' overall purpose of study abroad (Maundeni, 2001). If international students do not go out of their 'comfort zone' and socialise with the local community besides their own co-nationals (Ward et al., 2001), this brings into question the international students' stated aspiration for cultural capital that they mentioned earlier as an important part of their study abroad purpose and motivation. A few of the students acknowledged this and mentioned the disadvantages of socialising with their co-nationals. Walid shared his opinion on this matter:

> (…) sometimes I feel that… it's good to kind of like know I guess who you are and your roots that kind of things to maybe give you that kind of familiarity and background and support that you need. But sometimes too strong an association can kind of cause hindrance towards local simulation and also for trying out new experiences and wellbeing abroad it's the new experience that you're looking for.

> Sometimes clinging on too closely to I guess what's familiar may not be a good thing.
>
> (Walid, Male, STEM)

As narrated above, Walid articulates one of the purposes for study abroad, which through a Bourdieuian lens can be seen as cultural capital accumulation. By being too comfortable with familiar groups as he suggested, this would probably not encourage them to open up to other new people and cultures, which runs counter to the stated purpose of having an experience abroad. On this matter, however, based on the data presented in the table, it was apparent that who the participants considered closest to them during their sojourn were mostly their co-nationals during their sojourn.

Besides offering support through shared identities and maintaining cultural values, other Malaysian students were also helpful in terms of practical matters to the majority of the participants. Most of the participants mentioned that they seek help from the Malaysian community in the UK for various practical matters, which included information such as visa applications and accommodation (see Section 3.3.3.1). Similar experiences prior to their sojourn provided participants with an understanding of the same concerns and the perception that their co-nationals would provide them with information that they may need before arriving in the UK. Comparable backgrounds and nationality were also considered as crucial, as they could gain access to significantly useful advice, especially when dealing with issues such as migration, visa procedures as well as experience as international students abroad.

In another instance, Faezah narrated how in times of need, they rely on other co-nationals in terms of practical matters.

> (…) one time there's a problem with my bed, but after one month they didn't help so finally Gia's husband helped me. So we came up with something. I think we are survivors.
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM)

> The married men here are more polite and respect you more. Maybe because they know we are a small community here, so we have to look out for each other… brotherhood and sisterhood (laughs).
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

'I think we are survivors' is a strong phrase as it not only suggests strong association with others from similar cultural values, but also a sense of belonging and camaraderie in the host country. Similarly, Fina expressed the same sentiment and viewed all Malaysians here as 'brothers and sisters' due to the small numbers of the Malaysian community in the UK. She further described her observation on gender. In her opinion, married men, here, are politer and more respectful, which probably suggests the shift of perceptions on gender relations and distance. Hence, what is common in Malaysia due to being away from home, is that maintaining good rapport with other co-nationals is vital.

Although the majority of the participants perceived pleasant experiences with their co-nationals and recognised the importance of maintaining good rapport with one another, several felt some dissonance with their own co-nationals. For example, Lee and Walid felt that sometimes even with their co-nationals, 'cliques' had already formed, and they shared similar unpleasant experiences at community events.

> Four years ago, I joined one of the events from the Malaysian society and I had a horrible time. The president came and opened the door, and then she just ignored me. Then I go about myself and everyone formed groups of themselves, which I can't join in.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM)

> (…) you're coming to an event to socialise with other people but you're choosing to stay within your own pocket or group and that's not what actually the function is about.
>
> (Walid, Male, STEM)

Both Lee and Walid further talked about how, at these events, the others in the community were living from different areas and universities. It was implied that these were their initial impression of the events that they joined, and they decided not to attend future events. For both Lee and Walid, issues such as 'cliquiness' could be a challenge to form new relationships with others in HE, despite sharing the same origin country, an issue raised in wider studies of the undergraduate student experience (see Read et al., 2018). In both of these accounts, it could be perceived that at times disassociation could also happen with your own co-nationals. This is a factor that is under-researched in the literature about the international student experience.

Another participant, Wahida also expressed her isolation from the Malaysian community, but due to different reasons.

> I think because of my personality, because I don't really mind, I can survive on my own, or being friends with people from a different nationality. But at PhD level, I realised that I cannot be snobbish; I must know a few Malaysian... I don't have to know a lot of them… but I must know a few good ones, because… number one for connection purposes, networking and also number two… I think it's important to get to know other Malaysian students, you know. Because they have to go back to Malaysia, I mean some of them have to go back to Malaysia for data collection. So, I want to know how they do it, you know, their process, the procedures; so when I did my Masters, I don't know any Malaysian students— in fact, I avoided them. But when I'm doing my PhD, I realised I cannot be snobbish, I cannot be cocky, I must have a balance.
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH)

Wahida had more local and international friends, but her aspiration for social and cultural capital led her to perceive that other co-nationals are also important. She acknowledged that having other Malaysian friends who are doing their doctoral studies could help in acting as informers for research matters due to sharing a similar study context. It could be implied here that Wahida unintentionally isolating herself from her co-nationals for the opportunity to increase her engagement with others in the host country to increase her social capital is her way of being strategic with her social groups (see Ward and Searle, 1991); however as she mentioned, finding a 'balance' was needed to ensure that she still had access to information as a researcher from her country for academic purposes.

Ethnicity was also an important factor for one participant. According to Hanah, who is Malaysian Chinese, she felt that she was missing 'connection' and her identity as 'Malaysian Chinese' because there were not many Malaysian Chinese in the UK.

> (…) what I can say that - it is not - a complete community - it's mostly Malay community. So, um I only can attach myself with the community for Malaysian... but not really in terms of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic - no matter how, I still need to find my Chinese group - I need that actually. I need that to - not saying that I will forget - but I need that closeness - no matter how. I think you will feel it that way - you need some friends - but you still need your Malay community. Like myself, I need the Chinese community - but not Chinese from

> China, actually I need Chinese from Malaysia. Yeah... to feel the closeness you know - I need that closeness you know, I need that kind of - I'm not saying insecure, I just want to have the closeness (…) this community, um, the limitation from this community for me - for me, myself, I will think that it is not a complete Malaysian community- it's just- maybe because we don't really have that much Chinese and Indian from Malaysia as well. So, uh, I don't really have that much of sense of belonging.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

This suggests the importance of relations with other people from the same ethnic background, as found in other studies of students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK (see Burke et al., 2017). Although she had other friends from Malaysia and also Chinese friends from her academic and social network, she still felt that she was lacking her 'sense of belonging', as she mentioned, due to loss of other people in her network sharing her own ethnic background in the UK.

7.4.2 Home and other international students

When asked regarding the students' circle of friends besides their co-nationals, I have found that many of the students share the same offices, studying in the same schools, or are from the same research groups. Similar research interests give a sense of solidarity to the students especially to individuals from the same schools. However, from Leah's narrative *'good as friends'* also suggested that the relationships she forged with these students did not necessarily have depth beyond acquaintances. It also suggested that the informants got to know other students through academic settings and were not involved with other home and international students outside academia settings that much.

Others, for example Nasir, attributed close relationships with his research groups and sharing the same supervisor.

> He's local from far north of Scotland... he contributes some of his experiment results, and then let's just say we have some collaboration with some research works that's why we, like, communicate to each other all the time. And then not to mention both of them are working under the same supervisor as mine. So, that explains why. *(laughs)*
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM)

Nasir, who had several years of working experience, exuded confidence during the interviews and when describing his relationships with his colleagues, he expressed his exposure to other international communities even before coming to the UK due to his previous employment. He highlighted that due to the nature of his project, he would have to interact with his colleagues, who are home students, almost every day. Besides that, since they shared the same supervisor, this had further bonded them together. It could be suggested that Nasir's age and previous working experience had provided him with both social and cultural capital, which gave him confidence interacting with colleagues. When compared to other students who had less working experience before starting their programmes, this had given them more confidence, especially when interacting with home students.

7.4.3 Married and student parents

For the married participants, their sojourn not only benefited them but, through a transnational lens (Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005), it also could be seen as a way for their families (spouses and children) to acquire cultural, symbolic and social capital. In this sense, their children benefit from their interactions with local people at schools, and this suggests that they see the benefits relationally rather than individually. However, according to the literature, Phelps (2016), for example, found that student parents with children were challenged with their ideals of 'home' and 'belonging' by their children who grew up in a different environment and culture. Moreover, having commitment to family and other matters could also be a factor for less social interaction with the host community (Kudo and Simkin, 2003). Amongst the married participants in the study, two of the participants had children who were attending schools during their sojourn. I would like to bring attention to language practice of the sojourners who are married with children as this helps illuminate how language is perceived and practiced at a familial level.

Saleha, who had two sons attending schools during her sojourn, felt that her children benefited positively by the experience. She also mentioned that the school teachers encouraged her to use their native language at home since the children exclusively used English at school with their teachers and peers. According to Cummins (2005), "native language practices are often embedded within family life, the home environment; parental influences are seen to be greater than the role of the peers in heritage language proficiency" (p. 585). On this point, the two participants shared their observation on their children's education attainment.

> Oh okay… my kids! I can only refer this to my kids. They absorbed language so far. They can really absorb it fast... like me, my mind is rusty. So, it takes me maybe like a year to learn a new language for example. So, like, my kids, when she went to the nursery last time, here, when she comes back, she talks like Scottish. So, I was like, oh my God! So, they… and sometimes, her words and also her sentence much proper than mine, than my English sentence, I was like, Oh man, this is good! And sometimes I couldn't understand what she is saying. And she got many words that she got from the school, and when she comes home, she will tell that to me. So, many, many fine words.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

One of the advantages of being a PhD student for Alif was having more flexible working time, which was previously fixed when he was in Malaysia. This gave him more time to spend with his family. However, the transition to become a student and balancing his new routine and responsibilities at the same time could be a challenge. Ahmad told how his daughters acquired the English language as well as the local accent when attending the nursery, which he described proudly and animatedly. From his perspective, he perceived his children's English language and local accent as cultural and symbolic capital, which benefit his children's future.

> I think in terms of education I think, because I have two sons, and I have been exposed in government schools in Malaysia, compared to my children, where they are exposed to Scottish government schools, I think, um, the idea of, um, students being registered as primary students here is brilliant. Because they are being given a very strong foundation, especially of reading where they are using the Jolly Phonics system. And I can see that when I was five years old, I was not fluent in reading English, whereas my children they even can teach me how to properly read and how to pronounce certain words in English.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Similarly, Saleha also regarded her sons' education experience in the UK as an advantage for their capital accumulation. She compared her own past experience with her children and felt that they received better English language lessons, and even learnt to pronounce English words correctly. From these narratives, Saleha and Ahmad's sojourns had also enhanced their children's social and cultural capital from attending schools in the UK. This also suggests that both student-parents portrayed, to some

extent, emotional capital (Nowotny, 1981) when it comes to their children's education experience.

> What I can say is that... here, the education is much more flexible… it's not too strict. I can give you an example of primary student... my son. They are not like bringing tons of books, no. They just bring a couple of books, but the consistency is very tremendous. What I can say is that although they are just bringing one or two books per day at home, but they can read that book very well. Ahh, as compared to you have to carry a lot of books, but you get nothing from there. So, what I can see that the system is much more lighter, but it's in a consistent way… so they don't put much pressure.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

However, Saleha mentioned that despite her children's impressive English language acquisition and education they have received whilst in the UK, it is also equally important to ensure that her children learn their mother tongue. *"So, for example, if you see here if we don't practice them how to read bahasa melayu, they will read this as kuking (kucing) and another example tukeng (tukang). So, it's quite a problem for us if we don't provide foundation for them here because they are going to be in local schools soon when we get back to Malaysia."* She also shared her concerns of the issue in her social media.

> When I look at the syllabus for Standard 1 students in Malaysian schools, I feel worried, the questions are far more challenging. Hopefully the children will be ready being schooled in the homeland later.
>
> *(Saleha, Female, STEM, SU)*

As demonstrated by a student-parent above, besides the observation on the differences between the teaching and learning experiences of her children, she also expressed her concerns for her children when they return from their sojourn. She also documented her observations on social media to share with others in her network. Her observations which were in contrast with the Malaysian education system include: marking students' work with black instead of red pens, a black dot at the end of the students' work instead of 'X', and motivational or encouraging words for the students for their work such as 'Great' and 'Nice work!'. For these children, who did not grow up in their homeland, challenges are expected especially in terms of educational and cultural experiences they have received whilst on their sojourn. This indicates the importance of

educating the children who grew up in the host country to ensure an easy transition to their home country upon return.

Besides children's academic experiences, other student parents discussed about their roles as husband or wife. For instance, Hanah, spoke about her experience in terms of her role as a wife and a student.

> Another challenge would be I have a husband. I'm not saying that my husband needs so much care from myself, he can take care of himself. But, um, eventually, I am not alone; I am not single. So, which means no matter how I still have responsibility in terms of cooking, in terms of household tasks… so, I still have… I'm not thinking of myself right now. So, I have another one I need to think about. So, sometimes - not really a big challenge, but a still a challenge between how I *jaga* [manage] between my study life and my family life… So, just a little bit you know… in terms of challenges to my PhD, but so far so good.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

As initially discussed in Chapter 5, Hanah's narrative highlights how the sojourners' experience abroad is also potentially gendered. Besides her identity as a PhD student, she was also a wife and that came with specific gendered responsibilities. Although she stressed that her husband was understanding and supportive to her throughout her PhD journey, she was still challenged with balancing her responsibilities with her studies as well as her duties as a wife.

Another participant, Saleha, wrote on her wall:

> *When I am writing my thesis, I will be in another dimension, I did not notice my husband next to me, my sight goes through the wall.*
>
> *(Saleha, Female, STEM, SU)*

Similarly, Saleha recorded her thesis writing experience, which she amusingly mentioned as not noticing her husband as she would be 'in another dimension'. The online narrative by a female participant suggests the focus needed for her thesis writing. Besides that, it also highlights her identity and role as a wife, while writing her thesis. Both examples by Hanah and Saleha highlight the gender roles, which also implied the domestic responsibilities of the participants towards their spouses (Ackers, 2004; 2010), which is due to cultural practices (Fetcher, 2012). Despite geographical borders, these expectations are perceived to be embedded.

Meanwhile, Ahmad highlighted his own gendered role as husband where, in a patriarchal family, he is expected to provide for the family.

> Even let her bring her mobile number over here, create a cashback card for her, (…) bus ticket for her travel to gain knowledge over here - which she loves doing that with the kids. So, she doesn't just sit in the house with the kids. So, she has the means to go, to seek something else, maybe, sort of, entertainment for her.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

Ahmad narrated the stereotypical responsibility of a husband as a provider for his family, and in this case to ensure his wife and children are comfortable in the host country. These two examples show how two married participants continue to reflect the prevalent gendered cultural values of their homeland by performing their 'roles' as husband and wife in the host country. Student parents also believed that they could rely on their spouses for support to face difficult times.

> I need to have a conversation with someone if I have problems so that I can express that and not keep it to myself, so my husband. So, we always have a very good discussion on a daily basis… so I think that is my coping strategy.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

For Saleha, daily discussion with her husband helped her when she was distraught. Similarly, Siti shared a similar sentiment regarding her husband. It is also interesting to note that their spouses were also doing their doctoral studies at the same time. This similar journey that they shared probably enabled them to understand and offer support to each other during challenging times.

The data in this section demonstrated several aspects of participants' transnational lives. First of all, their sojourn does not simply benefit them individually in acquiring cultural capital, but also their immediate families, especially their children's education; in many ways demonstrated in the data and also by previous studies (Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005). The cultural values, in terms of gender roles of husband and wife as experienced by the participants in the study, are consistent between home-host countries as reported in Fetcher (2012).

7.5 Sojourners and the social media

As sojourners, the participants' narratives also proved that 'out of sight does not mean out of mind'. Distance proved to be just in the mind for the participants. The majority of the participants regarded that they still kept close relations with the people close to them during their sojourn and their 'family' and 'friends in Malaysia' as being the group of people in the first circle based on the table. With today's technology, maintaining transnational ties is becoming easier.

7.5.1 Maintaining social ties at 'home' in Malaysia

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and others, are amongst the tools that sojourners use to stay connected and share their lived experiences with those on their social network especially family and friends back home (Wilding, 2006). Since social media platforms, which could be considered as 'the social glue of transnationalism' (Vertovec, 2004) are seen as part of individuals' everyday lives, these platforms present how and in what ways the sojourners perform their transnational lives. In particular, the 'status update' feature on Facebook allows the users to express (or at least perform to others a certain version of) their thoughts and feelings. These posts, which can also be seen as 'journaling' or 'microblogging' in the new age, presented not only their experiences, but also in ways the participants perform their transnational lives, where they maintain not only relationships, but also cultures and identities of their homeland (Martin and Rizvi, 2014). Furthermore, it is especially relevant to international students as tools to adapt to their new environment, especially to cope with the feelings of loneliness and anxiety (Yu and Wright, 2016).

From the interviews with the participants, they narrated how they view their social media use, especially Facebook, and how they fit the social media platform in their daily lives as sojourners. The majority of the participants quoted daily engagement with family and close friends back home, as well as others in the host country. Although there are myriad social platforms available based on the individuals' personal preference, accessibility and desired goals through their social media use, Facebook attracted the most attention from the participants due to its accessibility to search for other Malaysian community members online.

The majority of the participants mentioned that they joined the relevant Facebook groups to find information about the environment, and found these groups helpful especially during the early stages of their sojourn. Participants narrated 'looking for information on accommodation', 'making friends with other co-nationals', and

'information on Malaysian cultural events and gathering' as the main purposes for their engagement on Facebook. However, the participants' engagement on Facebook, as it was described in the interviews, varied. The majority of the participants articulated their use of Facebook as minimal, or simply as 'passive users'. According to the data found on the participants' social network during their sojourn, the majority of the participants' families remain important individuals in their lives, despite the distance. The narratives below can demonstrate this:

> The closest to me are my family… my mom and my sister. My siblings every day because we have a WhatsApp group and Facebook. And relatives... nieces… the close conversations with my family members.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

> Just to get news and keeping updates on my friends, my circle, life… maybe they have my cousin, they got a new baby, new-born baby for example… is it a boy or a girl… things like that.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

> All family members have my social media. I would say we are quite close. (…) So, I have all their Facebooks, all of their Instagram, all of their WhatsApp, everybody knows what everyone is doing.
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

> And in terms of friends, yeah, I feel more close to my friends in Malaysia because I don't want to have the gap. Even though we live… in terms of the distance - UK and Malaysia - so, I don't want that to become the obstacles or the limitation for me to… not to remember them. So, through Facebook, I try to communicate with them... and I want to retain the relationship… and when I come back to Malaysia around 2018… so, I know what is happening in Malaysia.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

All the narratives above suggest how social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp help to maintain the transnational social ties between the participants and their existing social network in Malaysia. Lily further mentioned that besides maintaining relationships with others, she would be able to keep abreast of the latest news in Malaysia during her time away. This shows how social media is able to keep sojourners updated and have an easier transition, not only in the host country during their time away but, also, as Lily suggested, as she returns to her home country.

Despite the distance, the participants are actively creating spaces and opportunities through mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996), which suggests the more inexpensive way to maintain and create relationships. The 'everyday life' is then translated to the virtual world for these sojourners. There are many purposes for individuals using social media besides maintaining social ties.

Besides using Facebook to maintain social ties with family, friends, and news updates, the majority of the participants also mentioned how Facebook helps them to access and maintain academic networks both in the UK and in Malaysia.

> My PhD for my study, I basically I follow some groups, motivational groups, that would be number one, because I think sometimes I need somebody to basically to boost my spirit every day. Especially when I have a dark, tough day, for example. Bad day, that would be number one. Number two, I follow a professional group, yeah, professional group, PhD kind of like a group, for example, whereby they're going to share some tips, some information for example, (…) information that they share much more… quite relevant by the way, and yeah. Other than that basically to share the update as well because I think I'm going to do an online survey, so I will need these people.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

According to Azlan for example, he followed motivational groups to support his studies as well as academia groups for the purpose of his research project. Lily also shared the same sentiment and added that she had created multiple Facebook accounts for different purposes.

> I'm using Facebook because I want to create networking since I started as a lecturer because at that point of time I need to research before I need to find other researchers. Therefore, I joined a few groups related to research... for example, the Doctorate Support Group[48], the research thesis and something like that, and then I follow a few top researchers and professors, that is the main things now. And because of that purpose, I create another Facebook account just because of just to… to focus on related to research.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

[48] A hub where you share and read about scholarly communication and education. Source: Source: 'About' information of 'Doctorate Support Group' https://en-gb.facebook.com/mydsg/

For Lily, having multiple accounts is important to 'separate' her lives, in this sense. By doing so, she is able to separate her activities and the information that she shared on different accounts. Although the majority of the participants discussed many ways in which Facebook benefited their lives, a few of the participants also shared how, sometimes, social media could pose as a distraction. Saleha stated she felt overwhelmed with Facebook at times, and suggested that her intention for using Facebook to maintain her connection with other Malaysians could be replaced with the Malaysian community here.

> I used to have Facebook in my first and second year… and I thought, arghhh (frustration), everything is Facebook, it's overwhelming. So, I need to like, retire (laughs) because it's so overwhelming… But, it's very good you can post, and very enjoyable, but I think I need own time… that's why the Malaysian community is here.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

For Saleha, as she needs to engage less on Facebook, the Malaysian community helps her to feel belonged, being away from home. This, again, strengthened the data discussed earlier in Section 7.4.1.

7.5.2 Recording living and learning experiences

Besides using social media as a medium to maintain social ties, the majority of the participants also use Facebook and other social media to record their living and learning experiences. For example, Azlan, besides maintaining social ties with family and friends back home, also used Facebook as a way to document his journey during his sojourn.

> Facebook, it's very, very important for you to connect yourself with people that you care about, people that you love, by the way. And, um, I usually going to - there'd be like some habit because I think like you mentioned just now, so we're facing a lot of stressful events, every single day, so, I think this is actually one of the outlets as well for us to basically to calm down, you know. So, yeah, I think it's very, very important - and how you want to use it is completely depends on you - what is your motivation?
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

As elaborated above, Azlan also used the social media platform as an ‘outlet’ to release his stress. However, he also acknowledged that different individuals have different ‘motivation’ or purposes to using social media.

Besides that, some participants use Facebook to record their academic journeys at various stages. These posts are intended as a form of support-seeking from his friends and family on his social network. A few examples of the participants’ status updates:

> *Patiently I'm waiting for this moment to arrive… #APR #yearone*
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH, SU)

> *Thank you to everyone… my parents, wife, family and friends for the well wishes. I really appreciate it, and I miss everyone, especially my ever strong wife @mas*
>
> (Walid, Male, STEM, SU)

> Stand out from the crowd and shine like a diamond! Oooyeeaaahhh!!! #PGRI2014
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH, SU)

> *There is someone who is suffering chasing the deadline, there is another who is laughing watching running man #blessed*
>
> (Kirin, Female, SSH, SU)

> *When I am writing my thesis, I will be in another dimension, I did not notice my husband next to me, my sight goes through the wall.*
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM, SU)

Meanwhile, for one participant, he used his Facebook as a study ‘journal’. For example:

> *Problem statement: How to portraits all this data???? so far reason for this figure, no correlation but somehow there is a relationship*
>
> *hmmm, I haven’t learn R language, so I've zero knowledge about it...*
>
> *I'm still not satisfied with this equation*

(Darius, Male, STEM, SU)

For Darius in particular, by journaling his progress, he is able to use these documentations as his future references. Such activities demonstrated the creative ways how doctoral students use their Facebook as not only documenting experiences to share with others, but also for own benefit, as demonstrated by Darius.

Besides using social media to document academic experiences, one participant, Saleha, used social media for her entrepreneurial venture.

> I have to focus on more important things. So, I just use Facebook for marketing purposes, that's it. Because I'm active blogging until now, sometimes Facebook we have very limited words to type and you cannot express yourself so much, but I think in terms of especially we just published the news… the children's progress... that's it… not so much. How to say that. A bit here and there. Not everything is being reported in Facebook, that's very dangerous. So, sometimes you go there and there, so for security purposes we don't tend to expose everything (laughs). I think I like keep updating them… daily basis… sell *nasi lemak*[49] also… I tell my family.

Besides being a way to promote her business, as she mentioned, Saleha also used the social media platform to blog and share her knowledge as a sojourner in the UK for the benefit of others. Examples include:

> *In the UK, if food reaches the expiry date 'Best before', the price of the food would decrease.*
>
> *We visited the Edinburgh Castle, in conjunction with St Andrew's Day, in which the tickets are free.*
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM, SU)

By sharing these observations, she is able to help others in terms of money-saving tips, especially to other sojourners in the UK.

[49] rice cooked in coconut milk. Source: https://ms.oxforddictionaries.com/

In addition, the majority of the participants also mentioned using Facebook as a space to record their travelling experiences during their time in the UK. A few of the participants mentioned that they used the privacy settings in terms of sharing information with others in their social network. For these participants, the travelling photos or albums are, most of the time, restricted to close friends and family members.

> *Parthenon... Winter in Athens*
>
> (Kirin, Female, SSH, SU)

> *A very short trip with friends in Manchester and Liverpool*
>
> (Saleha, Female, SSH, SU)

Besides travelling experiences, other participants documented their daily observations or experiences. For example, a male participant posted one of his observations during one of his Friday prayers[50].

> Since the Paris attack, was surprised when I see the police in the mosque earlier. Turns out, there's a CCTV near mosque to control the safety of everyone close to the area. My heart was pounding as the cops were behind me during prayer time.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM, SU)

This particular status was posted a few days after an attack in Paris. The post highlights Qayum's experience as a Muslim in the UK, and how the authorities took measures to protect the safety of the community.

Despite the different ways on how the sojourners incorporated social media in their lives, a few of the participants mentioned 'moving away' from Facebook to other social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram due to their more 'private' and 'intimate' nature.

> But I guess that's what you want to achieve in Facebook. You want to know what's happening with your friends and family *kan* [right]? I used to think that Facebook is important, but I don't think that it's important anymore because personally I think if you really want to get in touch with that person you can do that through WhatsApp.

[50] *Salaat-ul-Jumma* or Friday Prayer is offered in congregation. It is offered in place of *Zhuhr* Prayer. Friday Prayer is an occasion for the assembly of the Muslims of a whole city or a town. Source: https://www.alislam.org/

(Siti, Female, STEM)

This is probably due to the overwhelming features that Facebook has been updated with over the years, which resulted in her using WhatsApp instead as it is more personal and focuses more on communication rather than other purposes. Media, regardless of its platform provides various purposes for the users, and sojourners use them strategically.

As mentioned above, people invest time and energy in order to present a particular version of themselves to others via their social media. According to Goffman (1959), this suggests not an 'objective' true self, but a particular presentation. Fina highlights this point accurately; she believed that it is important to filter the information that she posted on Facebook.

> Facebook is important, we don't want our families back home to be worried, I would just put up happy things to share… but actually I'm not... I just don't want them to be worried… not actually what I'm experiencing. There are ups and downs… but I would just share the 'ups' parts. And it's a way of telling people that I'm okay, I'm still okay. Because some friends they told me that they don't actually contact me but they know that I'm okay because they stalk my Facebook, and they know I'm okay.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

As she elaborated above, as she has her family members on Facebook, it is important to keep a positive persona on Facebook to avoid her family's worries. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Asian international students are unlikely to talk about the challenges that they were facing during their sojourn with their families back home in order to not worry them (Constantine et al., 2005; Heppner et al., 2006).

As apparent in the participants' narratives throughout the thesis, their identity as a Muslim plays an important role in their lives. For the majority of the participants, they would share and repost Islamic quotes to uplift their spirits and as reminders for them and others in their Facebook network.

> I think I share with them interesting things. That's very generic la *kan* [right?]. So, I like to share Islamic posts. I like to share recipes… I like to share funny gifs or funny videos... something macam tu. I don't like to share things like the war in Syria… I think it's very depressing. So, I like to keep Facebook a happy place la kut… a happy place but... *sambil-sambil* [at the same time] you still do your part

> in *da'wah*[51]. Sometimes… because it's a very important media, everyone uses it. But if you spread something good, *orang ingat* [people will remember], and you will get *pahala* [rewards] because of that.
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

As Siti explained, similar to Fina, she would like to keep her Facebook page as a positive platform and would avoid posting 'depressing' news and issues. Besides that, she also perceived Facebook as a platform to remind other Muslims in her network about God as this would not only serve as a reminder to her but, also, she would gain rewards from reminding others. Similarly, it was observed that the majority of the participants in the study who are Muslims posted or reposted various religious-related posts. These posts implied that the sojourners are actively creating spaces in the virtual world to remind them and others of religious-related information. Being away from which decreased their religious experiences and encouraged their religious online presence to help maintain their cultural practices. Hence, cultural practices that transnational migrants recreate in host country are not only practices offline (Ganga, 2005; Fortier 2000) and define their social role (Maynard et al., 2008), but actively online as well. Besides that, the majority of the participants also implied that these posts gave them emotional and spiritual support when facing trying times (Abdullah, 2011). Cultural awareness is also then mediated through this source to the participants' social network and, therefore, travels through this mediascape (Appadurai, 1996), and emphasised the participants' ways of belonging (Levitt and Schiller, 2004).

Although generally the participants documented positive experiences in their social media, several also updated other less positive encounters, such as racist micro aggressions. It is interesting to note that when asked regarding the matter during interviews, the participants did not indicate these negative experiences.

Below are a few examples:

> *Oh well, once again local teenagers make fun of me for being an Asian by making funny speech like a Chinese language on my face. So, I just smiled and walked away.*

[51] Da'wah usually means inviting to Islam. Arabic دعوة da'wah means literally "calling out" or "inviting", being used as an active participle of a verb meaning in various "calling, inviting". A Muslim who practices da'wah, whether a religious worker or in a volunteer community effort, is called a da'i, plural. A da'i invites people to understand Islam through a dialogue process, and can be categorized in some cases as a religious equality with a missionary. Source: https://educalingo.com/

(Azlan, Male, STEM, SU)

Done with lab at 830PM.. But it is still bright… Don't feel afraid going home alone… Yesterday I was harassed by the someone. I want to do a plastic surgery lah

(Qayum, Male, STEM, SU)

Menjadi bahan 'stare' sepanjang hari [Being a 'stared' at object all day]. Being Muslim and proud.

(Kirin, Female, SSH, SU)

The participant posted his experience with micro aggression on social media, and humorously mentioned that perhaps he needs to have cosmetic surgery to appear less Asian. Another participant posted of her experience receiving an uncomfortable 'stare' from the local people in one of the countries she visited due to portrayal as a *hijabi*[52]. However, as she indicated in her post, she demonstrated that she embraced her portrayal of being a Muslim and was 'proud' of her identity. This suggests the participants' self –presentation could sometimes affect their experience, especially in countries with less ethnic and cultural diversity. In spite of these uncomfortable experiences, the participants demonstrated resilience, openness and understanding to other cultures and, overall, reflected these experiences as positive encounters.

As narrated by the participants, Facebook as a social media platform is an important part of their daily lives during their sojourn. Besides helping the sojourners to maintain transnational social ties, it is also used for various other purposes such as sharing daily experiences, which help them cope with stress and anxiety, academic purposes, as well as a way to maintain their cultural values. Besides that, it was found that the majority of participants are also active in 'filtering' their presentation of self during their time as sojourners to ensure that their families do not worry about them by keeping their social media as a 'positive' space and recording pleasant memories. However, a few of the participants' updates also revealed micro aggression experiences, which the students were reluctant to discuss (or had perhaps forgotten) during the interviews.

[52] A woman who wears a hijab. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

7.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

The data in the chapter show the transnational experiences of the students during their sojourn and, in many ways, their habitus shifted through their everyday lived experiences. Data in Sections 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4, presents the realities of the participants' personal journey in becoming a researcher despite the majority being confronted with a different learning style from what they were used to. From their narratives, it is implied that they demonstrate perseverance especially when learning to become more independent and transitioning into their roles as researchers, through renegotiating their previous habitus, that of accumulating cultural capital during their sojourn. Besides the benefit of capital accumulation of studying abroad, the doctoral journey in itself is a transformative experience. Participants mentioned about maintaining close relationships with family and friends in Malaysia, as well as recording their living and learning experiences through social media. With today's technology, they are able to experience 'locality, culture, and belonging' through the duality of experiencing home and the host country simultaneously (Martin and Rizvi, 2014).

Chapter 8

Future pathways: future careers and mobility imaginings

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the participants' envisioned future pathways and mobility. Overall, the participants voiced that they have led fascinating lives during their sojourn, and they were thankful for the opportunities that they have had so far. The participants in the study were interviewed at various stages during their studies: they were in their second and third year of their respective PhD programmes. When talking about their future plans after their PhDs, the participants felt that, in many ways, the experiences that they have had during their sojourn has affected their imagined lives and identities in the future. In many ways, what they have experienced and continue to experience in the UK, whilst simultaneously living in 'trans' in Malaysia, has affected their dispositions as they constantly reconstruct their habitus.

The future plans that I will present in this chapter will not only be in terms of the participants' career pathways, but also where they envisioned themselves in terms of localities, as well as how they imagined themselves in the future moving forward in their lives. The participants were mostly excited for what the future may hold for them, especially with the newly acquired forms of capital they had acquired, as well as the opportunities to future 'social remittances' (Levitt, 1998) formed during their sojourn. Previous studies in the literature have discussed the various trajectories of doctoral students beyond their sojourn; however, the factors which are involved in students' thinking processes and decision-making, has been under-researched. I discuss in this chapter the many ways in which the perceptions and experiences of the doctoral students in my study, including such decision making, indicate their changing habitus through the experience of living 'transnational' lives.

Although it is beyond the scope of the present study to observe the students' lived experience after their sojourn, the participants' 'imagined' pathways in the future is a way in which the study contributes an insight into how the participants see themselves beyond and after their lives as PhD students. Although for the majority of the participants, their immediate future was felt to be 'pre-destined' to a greater or lesser degree, this did not stop them from envisioning other possible lives. Particularly due to

living a 'transnational' life, the nation-state borders became more blurred and, for many, they are able to see themselves as 'global citizens'; where they perceived possible potentials. This is aided through gains in forms of capital, which seem to have opened up more possible imagined pathways.

Moving on from their present lives, many of the participants attributed this more to the people and culture that they were able to experience. Although the majority of the participants described reasons that could be related to academic capital purposes for their sojourn, and the more instrumental forms of capital (sometimes known as 'human' capital) that may help them in the job market, they also valued aspects such as encounters with local communities during their sojourn.

Chapter 8 will illustrate the participants' future career pathways that they would probably have. I purposely used the word 'probable' in this case as, although for majority of the participants, their future careers were already determined by their sponsors as compared to the rest, a few participants also imagined other possible career pathways that they might consider should they have the opportunities to explore. This illustrates the ever-changing imaginations that the participants constructed for themselves, especially after the exposure that they have had as doctoral students (Hall and Burns, 2009; Barnacle and Mewburn, 2010).

Based on the interviews, it was found that the participants' future career paths for the Malaysian doctoral students in the UK tended to be pre-determined due to the agreement with their sponsors, except for participants who were self-funded or sponsored by a university (which in this case included two students: Lee and Farid). However, participants who were funded by F2 were also much more flexible in terms of their future career pathways.

8.2 Future Careers

Based on the table in Appendix 4, we can see that more than half of the participants interviewed (17/27) articulated that they intend to pursue careers in academia. As mentioned before, the majority of the participants were funded by the government and HEIs in Malaysia and, therefore, they had contractual requirements to return and serve the country.

As mentioned above, 17 participants expressed their intentions to return to Malaysia to serve at the various HEIs, which they are attached to. Of the 17 students, the majority

(10) were female. As many of the institutions that supported the participants were research universities, the participants were aware that their career paths would include not only lecturing classes, but also they would be required to conduct research studies. For these participants, before they sojourned for their PhDs, a few were already working at the various HEIs as lecturers or instructors in their subjects.

The majority of the participants who expressed their interest in academia with a particular focus in research were male participants (5/6). From the study, it was found that participants in STEM fields were more interested in being in academia with a focus on research compared to participants in Social and Human Sciences fields. Although the participants were all aware that they could not choose one over the other (researching over teaching and vice versa), in the interviews they expressed the career paths which would be most ideal for them. In one example, Hamid who had acquired experience as a lab instructor during his PhD, in some ways contemplated how he imagined his future career would be. Although his ideal 'next step' is to join industry, he was also aware that the opportunity was still lacking in his home country.

> I'm trying to... to go into industrial field. Because I've been teaching and then I know how University works and then how academia *punya* [academia's] style. *Kalau academia yang kena involve dengan student ni… macam ada je academia yang macam research kan?* [There is academia in research that involved students, right?]. And die tak deal with students…[If I do not have to deal with students], that's okay for me. *Sebab* [Because] you don't need to prepare and interact with student… *macam you tak perlu buat ape-ape* [you do not have to do anything]… *tapi ade academia yang macam fellow tu* [but academia, like a fellow]--- *macam you kena mengajar and there's a time you kena masuk group* [you have to teach and sometimes get into groups], I'm not looking forward to that. *So, kalau I masuk academia pun* [So, even though I go into academia], maybe I go for research field… instead of academia as in teaching. And since my project is on fabricating censor… so, I think it's more applicable for industry rather than teaching. I wish to explore more... to fabricate and all those things to learn all those things and when I'm comfortable with what skills I have, then I can share with my students. I think skill is important (…). So, *macam* [like] everything can change in PhD.
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM)

For Hamid, he was aware of the reality of having a doctorate degree in his field in Malaysia. This illustrates the lack of opportunities for a doctoral degree holder in

different spaces. Since opportunities in his field are still lacking in Malaysia, he envisioned the pathways for doctoral degree holders in his field as lying in academia. In his case, as well as perhaps the majority of the other participants in STEM, they were confronted with this reality. Furthermore, Hamid and Fahmi may also be influenced by western academic cultural discourses that place a higher value/status on research over teaching (Young, 2006). This distinction is also highly gendered as demonstrated below.

For Fahmi, though he would return to his employment as a lecturer, he is more keen towards research.

> I'm obliged to fulfil my agreement with my sponsor. So, I will be a lecturer after this. But I tend to focus more on towards being a research professor rather than academic professor. I love teaching so that's not a problem for me. But I love doing something innovative too. That's why I think I'm more towards research professor rather than academic.
>
> (Fahmi, Male, STEM)

Similarly, Fahmi also expressed his future aspiration for a professorship in research rather than in teaching. Although, as he narrated above, he loved teaching, he liked to be more involved 'hands on' with technologies and innovations, which research offers. In this sense, Fahmi's involvement with his research area over time gave him more clarity regarding not only his field, but also the future trajectories in his career as a lecturer as well as long term in academia. Lee, in contrast, mentioned an aspect of academia, writing, as a factor for not pursuing the career.

> I don't like academia that much... because I find writing papers is not my forte. I'm not bonded to anyone. So, for now I might… not that I might… But most probably I'm staying here working for my supervisor for a year as a research associate and then after that like I said I don't like academia that much I would like to move back to industrial and then... UK, Europe, or if I need to I might go to the United States because I have a brother in the United States, but it all depends... yeah it all depends, yeah. It's like I need to finish my thesis and then after that get everything done first and then fortunately my supervisor offered me a job after that. In that meantime I can think where to go, which is nice of him. Yeah.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM)

Lee and Saleha were the two participants who received offers for positions at the University after they have completed their doctoral degrees. For Lee, who was funded by the University, he was more interested in academia with a focus in research due to

writing not being his ‘forte’ as he mentioned. Being in academia, writing is something that comes hand in and hand with the profession (Murray, 2013). Although Lee was reflecting this based on his experience writing his thesis at the moment the interview was conducted, as an academic, there would always be some form of writing involved from the expectations of writing especially for journals for publications. In Lee’s case, his lack of interest in writing skills, which is required in academia, directed him to a more research focused career, albeit in still in academia. Saleha who was also in a similar position to Lee, was offered a position at her university after completing her PhD.

> I've been offered to become a visiting academic... to do my post-doctorate for two years… Actually I hope to do [anonymised field]. (…) because I want to practice back in Malaysia because when I go back to Malaysia I want to treat patients again... because [anonymised field] is quite tough… stringent test and it's quite expensive if you take that particular exam in Malaysia. So, perhaps [anonymised field] is one of them. The priority is I want to get through my post-doctorate here.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Based on her narration, above, she expressed that although she was going to pursue her post-doctoral tenure due to the potential to increase her academic capital, upon return, she was keen to return to practicing in her industry. It is perceived that although academia was in her near future after her post-doc position, after this tenure, however, she imagined herself returning to being a doctor where she would have more opportunity to be more ‘hands on’ and ‘treat patients’ as she mentioned. Although the participant sample in the study is small, it could be suggested that more male than female participants in the study were more interested in an academic career, which focuses more on researching. As expressed earlier, the participants were aware that responsibilities in a career in academia means that both teaching and researching comes hand in hand, more participants in the study regarded that lecturing classes appealed more to them. In fact, it was found from the study that more female participants than male participants (9/11) preferred academia with a focus on teaching than researching. This could be due to various reasons as shared by the participants who chose this pathway. It could be speculated that women are more likely to be drawn towards teaching than researching as ‘teaching’ is associated with having qualities such as ‘to nurture’ and ‘concern towards students’, which are often related to dominant constructions of ideal femininity (Rowland, 1996, p. 9; see also Leathwood and Read, 2009).

Sarah, who expressed her interest in sharing knowledge with her future students, also indicated this as her mother's aspiration for her.

> Interviewer: Are you planning to go into academia?
>
> Sarah: Yes, because that's my mum's dream. She wants me to be a lecturer. So, *inshaa Allah* (with God's willing)… after I have the PhD, I hope that it's easier for me to find a good job. If not in Malaysia, maybe here... as a post-doc or research associate.
>
> Interviewer: Why does your mum want you to become a lecturer?
>
> Sarah: I don't know... maybe the influence from surrounding (laughs) Yeah… because maybe because her friend has daughter or son that is a lecturer? I don't know. And for me personally, I think in Malaysia, if you want to… I mean as a PhD holder, there is no big demand for a PhD holder to get a good job instead of a lecturer. Instead of academician *kan* [right?] So, that's why I'm into that thing.
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM)

Besides the academic capital that a PhD degree is able to offer as a credential boost in the academic field, Sarah was also encouraged to become a lecturer by her mother. As previously discussed in Chapter 5, family is an important influence and their approvals is vital for future careers or paths taken by the participants.[53] Since the beginning, it could be suggested that Sarah's mother was an important figure in her life in relation to her decision to pursue a PhD degree abroad. From her narration, it was also indicated that being a 'lecturer' has a symbolic status as a high-valued profession in Malaysia. Being a lecturer in general is also regarded highly and perceived as a noble profession not only by the society in Malaysia, but also religiously by the Muslim society (in delivering beneficial knowledge to others). Furthermore, Sarah as also indicated that the most desirable and probably practical route for PhD holders is academia which, interestingly, was also cited by other participants in STEM fields.

Despite Lily's contract with her sponsor, which is regarded as a teaching university in her home country, it was clear that she has her heart set on teaching.

[53] see section 5.3

> Because teaching is my passion, therefore, I will spend the rest of my life in teaching and maybe doing research. So, since I have contract with Uni of SA; therefore, I have to finish my contract with Uni of SA first - serve to Uni of SA first and after that, I don't know, maybe I will jump to other university but still in the same profession as lecturer.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

She also indicated 'maybe research' as this was part of the responsibilities as a lecturer, even if she was currently attached to a non-research university, she was aware of her responsibility as a university lecturer, and the global movement of universities and other HEIs in the current neo-liberal era, which hinges on research (Marginson, 2007). Regardless of her future employment, she continued to envision herself as a lecturer with a focus on teaching, even with other institutions.

For Raudah, her decision to be in academia, particularly to be attached to the institution she was employed by, was to be close to her hometown and family. This was often cited in the literature, especially with participants from East Asian (and hence arguably more 'collectivist') cultural backgrounds (Trice and Yoo, 2007).

> Raudah: Because I'm bonded with the public university, so, I will stay with my employer and work with them and I think I will just stay in my hometown. (laughs).
>
> Interviewer: So, you intend to stay in academia?
>
> Raudah: Ah, yup. I don't see any other choice...probably after 20 years if I have opportunity to be like external director in other companies... maybe (I) can, but it depends on what I want at that time. But for now, I just aim to finish and go back to (city) and serve the university and try to I don't know… try to do get the next level… *Prof Madya* [Associate Professor] or whatever... try to publish as much as I can.
>
> (Raudah, Female, SSH)

For Raudah who had experienced working in industry before going into academia, she expressed the possibility of returning to industry and becoming an external director for a company. What is important in her narrative was also the ever-changing needs and wants of individuals during different points of their lives. For Raudah, previously, what motivated her to pursue an academic career was her desire to be closer to her

hometown, and her chosen career led her to her pursuing her PhD due to her employment's requirement. From my interview with Raudah, besides currently pursuing her PhD as a way to advance in her career, she was also aware of the importance of accumulating academic capital such as 'publishing as much as she could' as one of the requirements that she has to achieve in order to progress in her profession. This, in some ways, indicated her focus on the career ladder and PhD is another 'tick' off on her list on the career ladder in academia.

Similarly, Siti was another participant who had in mind her goal, earlier, when she entered her academic career.

> I always say to my husband I want to become the Dean of my school. I don't know, I said it so many times. At first it was a joke, *tapi lama-lama* [but, as time passed], I sort of want to become a Dean, so that I can actually have my own system and change syllabus, or how I run the school *ke*. I do intend on going back. I would want to change how the students study. I want to make them more independent and open-minded. So, that would be one of my big goals. It's not really on Science *ke ape ke* [or other purposes]. I enjoy Science, I like to do it, but the bigger aim is to actually change the students' *punya* mentality… macam tu *lah*.
>
> So, *kalau* [if] practice-wise, in my field, I'm not sure *ada tak* [if they are] scientific base for the products. So, I'm very sure *ada beberapa* [a few] group research *kat sana yang tengah study ape basis die ke ape ke… tapi tak pernah jumpa* [in Malaysia which have been trying to investigate the basis, but have not found]. So, my aim is actually to go back and provide a structural basis for how it works. My study *boleh* [can] visualise *macam mana benda tu* [the thing]. *Boleh bagi gambar, macam mana die berfungsi… macam tu lah* [I can give a picture how it works… something like that]. I think that's my goal *sebab tak banyak orang buat pasal benda tu* [because not many individuals are working on this].
>
> (Siti, Female, STEM)

It also struck me how the majority of the participants in STEM rather than in Social and Human Sciences fields talked about how their research studies were not explored by many individuals in their fields; consequently, this further increased the need for them to explore these respective fields. However, ironically, although they were able to explore and gain knowledge in these fields, after completing, they were faced with qualifications which, currently in Malaysia, are most valuable in academia, so the

greater status of research is not borne out in Malaysia. This observation is however, beyond the scope of the present study. Besides that, Siti also importantly expressed her desire to contribute to her profession through the system in her department, as she mentioned being able to bring change to her future students' 'mentality'. This shows Siti's ambition to contribute to her future employment not only in her field of expertise, but also in a more holistic manner where she would be able to change how her students see learning. In Siti's narration, above, she exemplified how her sojourn has benefited her thinking and knowledge, which she aspired to share as 'social remittances' with the people in her home country.

Although both Raudah and Siti were two of the participants in the study who articulated how they envisioned their career paths the clearest, their ultimate goals in their careers were different, whereby Raudah saw her doctorate as another instrument towards achieving her career goal, while Siti saw the need to achieve a doctorate to enable a position to make some changes at her institutional level and society at large. These two examples illustrate the power of agency, and how a doctorate degree could advance them to attain their career, and ultimately life goals. What is also important to emphasise is how their sojourn had affected their future aspirations. For example, in Siti's case, her exposure in the UK through her PhD has exposed her to new knowledge in terms of pedagogy, thinking and practicality. In transnational terms, Siti aspired to practice the UK's ways of being in academic spaces in her future institution.

Moving on from the participants' aspirations for careers in academia, several other participants in the study (7/27) expressed their desire to work in industries relating to their fields. Not surprisingly, the majority of the participants who wanted to work in industry were from STEM rather than the Social and Human Sciences fields. The majority of the individuals in this group (5/7) were also male participants. These participants, except for one participant, Mazni, who was a lecturer, all previously worked in industry before their doctoral endeavours.

For Alif, who was a government professional, after completing his doctorate, he was going to serve the department he was previously attached to.

> My future plans… after PhD, I will be working with the government, so when I get back there, yeah… I have to continue working with them. And I hope that I get to the department that is similar to my study so I can contribute more to the department.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

With his research skills, he hoped to contribute to his department by improving the service they were offering to society. In contrast, for Nasir, after being in academia, he felt that the academic world was not for him.

> Yes… um, before I came here, that's one the things that crossed my mind... it's like, um, I know doing a PhD is good for me because, as I said before, I work in a consultancy environment where it is like knowledge-based business... you have to have postgrad knowledge and then this certainly contributes and helps you… but, I have… but besides that I also think that, ah, let's say after three or four years' time, my PhD time, I'll change my work to academic, that is certainly an option. Um, but that was at that time… but now, I don't think academia will suit me (laughs) I don't think that I'm good at teaching people to do things and I just think that working in industry will suit me.... but I still won't rule out the possibility to work in academia but probably back in Malaysia, but not here.
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM)

Acknowledging the advantage of earning a doctoral degree in his field, Nasir, who previously worked in an environmental consultancy company, felt that during the years he was a PhD student, he considered a career in academia. However, although Nasir did not completely rule out the possibility of pursuing a career in academia after his PhD, albeit in Malaysia, he felt that industry was better suited for him. When I prompted the issue of locality further, a few issues emerged from his narratives.

> Interviewer: Why not here?
>
> Nasir: Um, I'm not sure… but… it's like, it's just… in general I don't prefer to work in academia, but if I were given the opportunity to work in academia, it has to be back in Malaysia… I think I can contribute more in that sense because I can bring back the expertise back to Malaysia and then it's easier to get, ah, like, maybe I have a better working network, let's just say. Let's just say that way. In the sense that maybe I can get like, it's easier to get research grant and then and do what you like and then giving back to Malaysia and then… well, that's a cliché word but probably (laughs) because I just want to go home (laughs). I don't know what's in the future... maybe industry will suit me best, that's it.
>
> (Nasir, Male, STEM)

From Nasir's narratives, a few issues surfaced. First of all, although he mentioned in the interview that he had opportunities in the UK after his completion, and he would not rule out academia as a possibility in the future, he felt that his skills would be more beneficial in Malaysia. When talking about the possibility to be in academia, he reasoned that in terms of applying for grants he would have a better network in Malaysia rather than in the UK. This exemplifies the importance he attached to social capital, and despite the connections that he has in the UK, he believed that he would benefit more from the connections and status that he has in his home country, and it could be suggested that if he were to stay, he has to start building his network again. In this sense, the loss of his existing social network because of his temporary sojourn, became one of the reasons to return. Besides that, he was also very keen on giving back to the society in Malaysia. This also exemplifies the 'social remittance' that Levitt (2001) advocated as a form of social capital, which Nasir hoped to bring in terms of ideas and knowledge to his home country. As argued by Pries (2004), sojourners' desires and aspirations may also change throughout their life cycle.

Meanwhile, for Ahmad, his future, in his words, is already 'written', at least in the immediate future.

> I've been tied to a contract, so my future is being written currently. I've been… I will be tied to seven to eight years to serve to Uni of SA as an instructor over there. So, I will go back to Malaysia unless I can pay back for the contract.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

His contract with his sponsor as a lecturer at university back home is a factor that prevents him from exploring other career possibilities. However, he mentioned that this could be negotiated if he was able to repay his study loan.

Mazni, for instance, who was previously a lecturer in an HE institution in Malaysia would like to try to work in the industry for a new experience.

> Maybe either find a new job... not new job, bukan a new job it's like find a new place for academic. Depends if *ada* [there's] opportunity to go into industry to do research maybe I'm going to grab that. Because I've never been working in the industry before this. *Tapi dah jadi lecturer for four years... maybe nak tukar kut bidang* [But, since I have been a lecturer for four years… maybe it is time for me to change my career].
>
> (Mazni, Female, STEM)

Since she worked in academia for a few years after she graduated, Mazni envisioned herself to explore industry after her PhD degree. This demonstrates her curiosity in other career possibilities besides academia. She also mentioned that many of her previous course-mates have careers in various aspects of the engineering industry, this may also perk her interest to explore the field after being in academia since starting her career. Alif who worked as a government officer before his sojourn felt that academia was a challenging career for him to pursue.

> Interviewer: Do you think you will be in academia?
>
> Alif: No. I think in academia they have a different level of knowledge. I think they have different kind… because they read a lot of books… the knowledge is there… they have lots of knowledge, so it requires you… you need to be more… knowledgeable to be in academia, I think. Yes, because administrator is about management… it's about work-life experience. But academia requires you to know about the research well. Yeah.
>
> (Alif, Male, SSH)

As he narrated, above, the academic world was something new to him; after leaving it for a few years Alif also stressed the 'different level of knowledge' that individuals in academia were required to have. He related academia with being required to "read a lot of books", as compared to his prior profession as a management administrator where experience mattered more. From his narrative it could be deduced that certain dispositions are associated to being in academia in comparison to his previous profession. For Wahida, who had experienced working as a tutor during her doctoral training, and previously worked in industry and felt that academia is not for her.

> Interviewer: What's your future plans after you graduate with your PhD?
>
> Wahida: I plan to get a job here.
>
> Interviewer: Do you intend to go into academia?
>
> Interviewer: I hate academia to be honest with you (laughs). I always tell my friends, if you find me in the academia one day, I had no choice, I have to survive and I got a job offer from academia, so that's why I took it. But other than that, I would like to work with the Scottish government as a researcher or

> maybe in industry. But my first target is industry, if I get the chance. But then again sometimes... I have the feeling that I will end up in academia... I just have the feeling (laughs).
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH)

Wahida, who revealed that she planned to stay in the UK after completing her PhD degree, thought that after experiencing tutoring at her university, she would prefer to work in industry or with the government here as a researcher. It was perceived that her previous experience as a tutor had encouraged this decision[54]. As she shared, although she benefited from her tenure as a GTA, it is inferred that the conflicting teaching approaches between the UK and Malaysia could be affecting her decision process. This suggests the transnational experience and change of habitus between these spaces, in this case, in this academic field. Although Wahida expressed her strong opinion about academia, this is intersected with her decision to potentially migrate to the UK, in which she felt that she would have to negotiate.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the participants in the study were sponsored by the government of Malaysia, and thus many would eventually return to Malaysia upon completion and served in various fields, especially HEIs and government-linked companies. However, for three participants in the study who were sponsored by F2 and who were not attached to any government bodies after completing their doctoral degrees, they felt that they were more open to other possibilities. During the time the interviews were conducted, they had not decided on anything concrete in the future, and were open to opportunities not only in their home country, but the UK and elsewhere.

One participant, Lisa, who was the most mobile of all the participants in the study before embarking her PhD, had an abundance of experience in various fields, and was able to contemplate the options she had in the future.

> Honestly, I'm not sure. I like teaching. But it's teaching, rather than lecturing. I do like research, but I do like research in terms of consultancy rather than…- but I have, um, I have a lot of experience, work experience. So, would I go into academia? I don't know. I have in a way worked in academia now… while doing my PhD. It's an easy life as compared to working in investment banking. Investment banking is very stressful. Academia is very easy, comparatively. So if I want a less stressful life maybe something that I'll consider. But other than

[54] see discussion 7.2.2

> that, I don't know yet. All that I'm thinking about now is just finishing my PhD and then after that. Because you know, we've got a company in Malaysia and we can teach anywhere, we can consult anywhere. I can be based anywhere. So, it's not something that I'm actually seriously worrying about as of now.
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

The sense on locality as unbounded to a certain place as narrated by Lisa is agreeable to Vertovec's (2009) notion of being able to reconstruct 'place'. With this in mind, Lisa was not too concerned with what the future holds for her. This is in contrast to other participants who considered academia as challenging and, thus, decided to pursue other careers after their PhDs. Lisa felt that with her time in academia as a tutor, she decided to take the opposite route that was more challenging for her.

Surprisingly, as reported by previous literature, not many of the participants talked about the economic advantage and opportunities in the labour market that they would be able to have as compared in previous literature (Sondhi and King, 2017). As the majority of the participants were bound to the government in Malaysia after their studies, this could be one of the reasons. Secondly, the majority of the participants also mentioned about the importance of family, and how it is important for them to return because of aging parents or other family-related reasons, which is also reported in other literature on students from East Asian backgrounds (Trice and Yoo, 2007). Thirdly, although they experienced some constraints, they are also making certain agentic choices but these, themselves, are also constrained or influenced by gender, family, religion and culture.

8.3 Imaginings of future mobility

Following the participants' future career pathways, they also articulated where they envisioned themselves in pursuing their careers. This illustrates the continuity of cross-border mobility of the highly skilled through their capital accumulation, which helped further open the opportunities for their aspirations.

The table in Appendix 5 illustrates the participants' next mobility. Besides accumulating cultural capital during their time in the UK, the participants' experiences in the UK opened up more possibilities with their acquired knowledge, skills and also social relations. Although the majority of the participants were sponsored by the Malaysian government and part of the agreement was to return home, they also articulated their

imagined lives elsewhere because of different reasons that were related to opportunities and further capital accumulations.

The majority of the participants in the study expressed a decision to return home immediately upon completing their PhD degrees (14/27). For the majority of the participants, this decision was stated as mainly due to a desire to contribute to their home country (Smith, 2007), besides fulfilling their bond with their sponsors, as well as family obligations.

> Interviewer: What are your future plans?
>
> Faliq: We're sponsored students so we need to go home to work for the government. So, *saya sebenarnya plan nak kalau nak stay sini lah-- nak buat-- tapi kite* bonded kan-- so, *tak boleh* [Actually I want to stay here, but we are bonded, so we cannot]. Probably post-doc *tapi setakat ni family pun suruh settle down balik sebab dah lama kan… 10 tahun.. So, die suruh balik Malaysia jugak lah* [but so far my family asked me to return because it has been long… 10 years… so, they asked me to return to Malaysia]. So, family *jugak la* reason *nak balik Malaysia sebab* family [family is the reason I'm going to return to Malaysia]. *Tapi, kalau saya sendiri, kalau boleh* nak work *kat sini lah sebab dah biasa die punya* education, thinking and experience *kat Malaysia saya tak banyak* [family would be the reason for my return, but, if I'm on my own, I'd like to stay because I'm used to the education, thinking and I lack experience in Malaysia]. Maybe okay *je sebenarnya kat Malaysia sebab tak pernah-- lepas ni tapi balik dulu lah tengok macam mana… kalau…* maybe after that, after bonding finished, *kalau* okay, stay je *lah, kalau tak* okay, *sambung kat sini. So, tengok macam mana* [Maybe it will turn out okay in Malaysia because I have not (worked) in Malaysia… but I will return and see how it goes. Maybe after bonding finished, if it's okay I stay, if not, I'll continue here. So, see how it goes].
>
> (Faliq, Male, STEM)

This raised the issue of transferability of 'social remittances' (Levitt, 1998) in terms of the skills acquired by sojourners 'unmatched' with how it is perceived in their home country upon return. Sojourners, at times, were left feeling 'fish out of water' upon return (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This could be temporary, but this articulated fear that a few of the sojourners have might suggest the spaces where their skills could be out of place in the different spaces between their home and host countries. With this in mind, Faliq felt that returning to the UK might also be on the cards in the future for

him. This highlights not only Faliq's sense of belonging, but also ways of belonging (Levitt and Schiller, 2004) due to his dispositions through his previously 'westernised' cultural capital accumulation. However, similar to the majority of the participants in the study, as well as others reported in previous literature, coming from a possibly more 'collectivist' cultural background or family is an important factor as a determinant, especially in their mobility[55]. Similarly, family continued to be the reason for the participants' return to their home country, besides their agreement with their sponsors.

> No matter how I think I'm going back to my country… because of course, first, I'm under the scholarship and it requires me to go back after my study... but I think I need to give back to the country first because I came here based on their sponsorship. So, the least that I can do is, you know, serve back the community first. Maybe after a certain period of my, you know, serving of the country then I can think maybe, you know, go to another country, but I don't think so because of family... everything that I have in Malaysia. So, I don't really have… I think about staying in the UK, but the weightage is heavier in Malaysia compared to the UK. So, I'm definitely going back to Malaysia. Unless I can bring everything back in the UK, then okay.
>
> (Hanah, Female, SSH)

Besides family and agreement with her sponsor for factors returning to Malaysia, Hanah perceived that she had an obligation to return and serve the community in Malaysia. This is seen as a way to 'give back' to the community after completing her PhD. Similarly, Raudah intended to return to her hometown after she finished.

> Maybe because I'm bonded with my employer... the government… so, I don't think I'm going to stay here. Even if I'm not… I don't think I will choose to stay here because my main intention to join the academic line is to go back to my hometown. So, yeah.
>
> (Raudah, Female, SSH)

> Because I'm a fully sponsored student, therefore, I have to go back to my country… serve the Uni of SA. But if I didn't… a fully sponsored student, maybe I will not staying here yet because I have parents in Malaysia, yeah. To settle down, maybe after I reached 60… 70… maybe I have the potential to come here, to stay here because I think UK is very lovely and especially in Edinburgh parts are very beautiful and very calm... I think it's very good to settle down here. But

[55] Refer section 3.6

> because I have family members in Malaysia, I think I cannot proceed with that dream to settle down here.
>
> (Lily, Female, SSH)

From a few of the interviews, the participants' imagined future mobility was heavily influenced and anchored ultimately by their families. Lily, for instance, articulated her dream to 'settle down; in the UK, perhaps in Edinburgh due to its being 'peaceful and calm'.

> Since I've been here like six years, so… I wanna go home and work in Malaysia… or somewhere Asian… that's my plan.
>
> (Hamid, Male, STEM)

Hamid, for instance, imagined Malaysia or other Asian countries as his future destination. For Maria, similar to Lily, she intends to stay in academia and continue teaching in the future.

> Maria: My future plan is to finish my PhD, go back to Malaysia and teach Physics to university students.
>
> Interviewer: Would you consider staying in the UK?
>
> Maria: No.
>
> Interviewer: Why?
>
> Maria: Even how good they are... the technology here, how attached I am to the technology here I still want to go back to Malaysia, do research in Malaysia, and teach a lot of Malaysian students about [Anonymised field] and share as much knowledge as I can to all Malaysians out there. That's it.
>
> (Maria, Female, STEM)

Similar to Lily, Maria, who was also attached to a HE institution in Malaysia, wanted to return to Malaysia to be able to contribute to the society. For Maria, one of the pull factors for her personally was the technology in the UK. She considered this as something that she was 'attached' to during her training in her doctoral programme. Despite the technology capital in the UK, she was passionate about teaching and sharing with her future students in Malaysia.

Severa; of the participants who were bonded with universities back home, also expressed their intentions to stay in the UK. For Saleha, this was definitely something that she considered; however, there were certain constraints.

> Interviewer: Do you think you will be coming back?
>
> Saleha: I feel like I want to stay here (laughs). But then certain circumstance… because my mum is not so well... so I have to go back and myself and my husband both of us are bonded with the universities… so, we have to serve the people.
>
> (Saleha, Female, STEM)

Besides Saleha, for a few other participants, aging parents were one of the concerns that urged their returns. Furthermore, in her words, "we have to serve the people", it is inferred that Saleha has a strong desire to give back to her country (Smith, 2007).

Next, the participants' imaginings of their future mobility is also due to their aspiration for future marriage (Espiritu and Tran, 2002). It is interesting to note that only the single female participants in the study mentioned marriage as one of the reasons for their return. Although there were other male students who were single in the study, they did not mention the same concern. This was Sarah's reason when asked what is in the cards in the near future after completing her doctorate.

> Get married! (laughs), have a good job with good salary.... and then send my mum to Mecca to do her *Hajj*[56]. What else? Just to support my younger brother and sister until they finish their studies, try to make people around me happy! Not only using money, but also spiritual...
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM)

Since Sarah also stressed the importance of spirituality, this could be associated with the importance of getting married in Islam[57]. According to Islam, marriage is advocated for those who are able. Sarah's narrative, here, also suggests although being in the UK

[56] The greater Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, which takes place in the last month of the year and which all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lifetime if they can afford to do so. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

[57] Based on Qur'anic verses, Muslim scholars consider marriage to be a natural act with two goals: (1) achieving peace and tranquility, and (2) continuation of the human race (Hamoudi 1432 AH, 27-29).

where more liberal ideas are common, she was still bound by Islamic values deep rooted in the cultures of her homeland.

Leah similarly indicated that she wanted to able to provide for her mother, besides fulfilling her personal academic goal.

> Interviewer: Do you intend to stay in the UK after you graduate?
>
> Leah: I miss home. And I want look after my mother and I want to do something about myself. I am a PhD student and I'm doing [Anonymised field], so in my study I found a few interesting plot twists in the Malaysian social economics politics situations and I believe Malaysians deserve to know and should not be used as something to be manipulated by the politicians. I want to go back to Malaysia because that's why I come here. I come here to learn something and I should go back to give back to them. And I want to get married soon, and I want to get married to a Malaysian. Before this only with a Malay Malaysian, but now I open my option to… Cina [Malaysian Chinese] *pun boleh* is also a possibility] (laughs).
>
> (Leah, Female, SSH)

Leah was also one of the participants in the study who wanted to apply her knowledge in her field, that she believed would be beneficial for the Malaysian society when she returns to Malaysia. Giving back to the society through social remittances (Levitt, 1998), as established, was scattered in the participants' narratives in the study. Specifically, in Leah's case, she hoped that her field would bring impact on social and political life of the community in Malaysia. Also, she suggested in her narrative, above, that due to the knowledge and exposure she gained whilst in the UK, she had to also renegotiate her habitus for the possibility of marriage with someone from a different ethnicity. In this sense, it could be inferred that her sojourn has not only benefited her capital pursuit, but also shifted her habitus to become more 'open' to other cultures or being more cosmopolitan.

For Mazni and Faezah, both expressed their newfound appreciation for their home country after being on their sojourn for a while.

> I plan to *balik* [return to] Malaysia... *jiwa kat* Malaysia [my soul is in Malaysia]. Maybe *sebab dah tua* [because I am already old]... Malaysia is the best... feeling *masa remaja tu dah kurang kut* [when I was a youth has gone].

(Mazni, Female, STEM)

> I would consider the UK as my travel destination… Because I'm bonded for seven years in Malaysia, and I just love Malaysia… and also my family. I like the culture here, in my opinion; it's better for me to stay in Malaysia. The UK is just for travelling destination, but not to stay.
>
> (Faezah, Female, STEM)

Based on the narratives above, after being away from Malaysia both Mazni and Faezah learnt to appreciate their home country more. The time away had given them both the opportunity to step back and value what they left behind during their time as sojourners. Asher (2005, p. 1086) describes this new perspective as a particular benefit of 'border crossing': "border crossing helps me come home, return to myself through self-reflexive praxis of being and becoming in the world". Besides that, the narratives above also indicate the participants' shifting priorities that come with age; for example, Mazni mentioned that as she got older, her desire to explore the world becomes less and, thus, prompts her decision to return upon completing her studies.

From the data, the majority of the participants in the present study intend to return to Malaysia upon completing their degrees. However, there were also participants who planned or considered staying in Scotland or other parts of the UK after their studies (10/27).

For Wahida, she had a clear personal goal to stay in the UK after her PhD.

> Interviewer: Would you consider staying in the UK after you graduate?
>
> Wahida: Yes, that is my plan, *inshaa Allah* [with God's willing]. So, I'm going to stay in the UK after PhD *inshaa Allah*.
>
> Interviewer: What's your future plans after you graduate with your PhD?
>
> Wahida: I plan to get a job here…
>
> (Wahida, Female, SSH)

It was clear that since Wahida's main goal was to stay and work in the UK after her PhD, she was more open to future career possibilities. In contrast to other participants who had contracts/bonds with the government, due to her agreement with her sponsor, she

had more freedom in terms of mobility. As a consequence of this, along with her personal motivation to stay in the UK for a longer period of time for capital accumulation, Wahida was willing to compensate with her future endeavours in terms of her ideal future profession. However, it was apparent that Wahida was very conflicted with decisions, especially when it comes to family considerations, but she was determined to stay in the UK. This highlights the agency and complexities of the participants' future transnational strategies in relation to family, job, and other community-related factors (Pries, 2004).

Fina, who similarly planned to stay in the UK, on the other hand, was motivated by acquiring more financial capital.

> I want to stay here and work here and pay off my loan. And I'm not attached to any university or the government. So that's my plan. So before I came here, I sell off everything, and I want to start afresh here.
>
> (Fina, Female, SSH)

In order to pursue education abroad, the majority of the participants articulated the sacrifices that they had to make, especially in terms of financial means. For many, during the time when they decided to pursue their doctorate abroad, they were already tied to financial commitments such as mortgages in their home country, and this may be even more financially challenging to participants with families. Although this was something that they had to do, realising the opportunity and the possibility of the 'imagined' capital accumulations for not just themselves, but their families, they are willing to make sacrifices for the purpose.

For example, For Fina, in order to make her sojourn possible, she had to let go of her assets in Malaysia. After her PhD, as she was not attached to any institutions, she planned to work in the UK to pay her study loan as the exchange rate would benefit this purpose. Similarly, Sarah planned to repay her study loan by working in the UK after her PhD.

> Maybe… because I need to pay the 20 per cent back to F2. If I need to work in Malaysia, it will take like nine or 10 years! (laughs) before I can finish all the debt. So, if I have the opportunity to work here, maybe I will work maximum two years just for the sake to pay back the money.
>
> (Sarah, Female, STEM)

Fina and Sarah's decisions were based on the high exchange rate in the UK compared to their home country. This would not only benefit them financially but, as Sarah mentioned, save her time to repay her study loan. As indicated by Sarah elsewhere in the chapter, the idea of achieving financial freedom conflicted with her desire to return to provide for her family as well as to get married.

Another participant, Azlan, felt that he was much more suited with the cultures in the UK as a factor to stay.

> I would definitely want to stay here because life is so much easier here. I know I'm not supposed to say that… the culture here makes you feel that you are welcomed, you feel welcomed. The most important thing you feel like you have an option kind of like… stress free life… and in terms of working environment for example, if I, you know they would start at 10 in the morning and close at six; so, I think I have a lot of time for myself… in terms of work ethics and the community is very strong. I mean the association relates to working environment and they can demand a lot of things. As far as I'm concerned, it's your choice basically to have a good life and serious about your life at the same time. I think that would be something that I'm going to miss, you know. So, that's why I think, I definitely consider to stay here.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

Azlan was faced with several issues that he related to the different cultures and opportunities in the different spaces. First of all, he mentioned about the western cultures in terms of working environment that he would much prefer compared to in his home country; this, as he narrated, was mostly due to his personal preference. He further elaborates on this:

> Because I can feel in Malaysia it will start in the morning… maybe I will teach later... I'm going to graduate *inshaa Allah* (Arabic: with God's willing) in higher level… Education is my industry. It's hard for me to go back to industry, but here, it's completely different. As long as you have talent, as long as you have the credibility to lead and, you know, you can work in any industry you like. So, that means there's no barrier for you to talk with the practitioner and also the academic as well, here. But in Malaysia, it's basically because the practice by the practitioner is completely different and the academic is completely different, so, you're not going to contribute a lot, I guess, you know. I might be wrong in terms of that perspective, by the way. But I think, here is… because I

> came across a few people who completed their studies, PhD, and they are not working as a lecturer, they still actually become an engineer, and some of them still work in the retail industry or something like that. So, that's why I said that as long as you have talent, as long as you have credibility, the whole world is your playground, you know. Here, the opportunities, you know. (…) It's hard actually to contribute back actually to go back to industry. Because they do not recognise between those two aspects - academic and industry. But yeah, because when we talk about PhD, this project, we can actually contribute a lot, not only for the academic society only, yeah. We can develop our society.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

Second, he discussed the inequality of opportunities that were available to him with the doctoral degree in the different spaces (Malaysia and the UK). It appears that he perceived his doctorate degree in Malaysia would give him an advantage only in the academic field (this was also mentioned earlier by Sarah). However, in the UK, he perceived that he would have the opportunities to not only be in academia, but also industry if he so chooses. This suggests that students in STEM fields not only face this issue, but also those in SSH fields, although less SSH students wanted to pursue their respective industries. In these transnational spaces, a doctoral degree has different values and meanings.

> Even though I said I'm gonna stay here… but not forever. They'll be one time when I'm going back, you know, to yeah, to give back, contribute something again… but yeah, if I have the chance to stay for another 5-10 years… so why not? Time flies… so why not? I'm going to consider that very, very much, basically.
>
> (Azlan, Male, SSH)

Azlan further mentioned that he considered staying in the UK for a few years before going back to Malaysia and contribute to the academic field in his home country. Ahmad was also open to possibilities of staying longer in the UK.

> Interviewer: Would you consider staying in the UK?
>
> Ahmad: From a very optimistic point of view, I'll be open to anything. Who knows if I will get any offers... very good, concrete offers, which is legitimate. So, why not? I love the weather. It doesn't mean that you can't go back to Malaysia.
>
> (Ahmad, Male, STEM)

Ahmad, for example, was attracted to the weather in the UK. Although this might sound trivial, factors such as weather and other 'tourist gaze' elements as mentioned by other participants in the study could be seen as a construction of space from the view point of the 'other', present important factors for their mobility as well as being related to the individuals' overall comfort and wellbeing. While others indicated that family is the reason to return, in contrast, for Lisa, it was her purpose for staying in the UK.

> Interviewer: Do you see yourself going back to Malaysia?
>
> Lisa: Eventually. Yes, eventually. Ahh... for the next few years… Possibly, here mainly because personal reasons because my husband's parents are older than my parents. So the chances of them going away first is higher so we would like to be here when the time comes. So, they are about ten years older than my parents. So, but it depends. If things change, *Nauzubillah* [God forbid] something happens to my parents than we'll move over to Malaysia. It all depends on the family. Family things.
>
> (Lisa, Female, SSH)

Unlike other participants who had families and ageing parents in Malaysia, and that being the reason for their return, for Lisa, family was the reason for her to continue staying in the UK. As indicated by Lisa and the majority of the participants in the study, family is an important institution for them, and many decisions and purposes in the past, present and future were due to family reasons, in ways that are complexly gendered (Sondhi and King, 2017).

Besides decisions to stay in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK, three male participants (Hamid, Qayum and Farid) expressed their interests to potentially be in other parts of the world after completing their PhDs. For Farid, he pictured his life in other English-speaking countries after his sojourn in the UK.

> Farid: (…) try to find work outside Malaysia probably in New Zealand, Australia… if not, maybe in Canada or maybe last UK. When I nearly retire then I go back to Malaysia.
>
> Interviewer: Do you mind if I ask you why do you want to go to other countries?

> Farid: I mean if you see what currently happened in Malaysia… there are limited opportunities in Malaysia… for this moment.
>
> Interviewer: Is it related to your field in particular?
>
> Farid: In my field, yes. Because the other thing is I want to gain a lot of… I mean a lot of experience that I want to gain especially in… outside of Malaysia because you have the opportunity to learn... because in Malaysia there is a limitation because that's why I said there is a limitation, there is a limited opportunity in Malaysia.
>
> (Farid, Male, STEM)

For Farid, a lack of opportunities in his field was the reason for him to choose not to return to Malaysia after his sojourn. It could also be suggested that he would like to gain as many experiences as possible before his return. He envisioned himself in other English-speaking countries such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada, for practical reasons as compared to other locations. Similarly, Lee mentioned the lack of opportunities available for him in his home country.

> Interviewer: Do you think you'll be going back to Malaysia?
>
> Lee: Going back to Malaysia… yes. But, to work there, not so much. Because the nature of my study… Malaysia doesn't have that much kind of opportunities just yet. Yeah, a lot of companies most of the companies they're doing manufacturing and things like that doesn't need my expertise at all. And all they need is yeah, routine engineer that does all the process all the time they don't need my expertise so, yeah. Getting a job is difficult unless I go to Singapore, but Singapore is a tiny country, so the opportunity is less as well... so, yeah so it's pretty aggressive to fight for it. So, yeah going back to Malaysia… only because of my friends and family. Not because of work.
>
> (Lee, Male, STEM)

Lee mentioned that the opportunities available in Malaysia for the engineering fields focused on manufacturing and processing, which is his niche. Lee even considered Singapore as it is closer to Malaysia; however, it might be competitive. Despite his intention to work outside Malaysia, he mentioned that he may return to his home country for his family and friends. Researchers' mobility could be driven by socio-economic and labour market factors (Guth and Gill, 2008).

For Farid and Lee, as they were not bonded to any sponsors (Farid being sponsored by his family, and Lee by the university), they were not bounded financially unlike other participants in the study, which encouraged their limitless imaginations for opportunities in the global labour market. However, both indicated that they would eventually return to Malaysia (after retirement for Farid, and family matters for Lee). These examples suggest the shifting focus for capital accumulation in different stages of the sojourners' lives. As Pries (2004) argues, sojourners desires are constantly changing in different parts of their lives, in this case, economic and cultural accumulation aspirations.

In contrast, Qayum aimed to do his postdoctoral studies in New York, USA, after completing his bond with his sponsor.

> Since we are bonded, so have to go back to Malaysia, teach and also come back to New York for postdoc. That's my aim. Because my boss now has a good connection with people in the US. But I think I think it's gonna be tougher now for Muslims to go to the US. And the aim is just to finish, buy a house, and take my parents to travel to places that's easy to get halal food and everything and for them shopping. Yeah. I think that's what they want, actually. So, make sure that they are satisfied with everything.
>
> (Qayum, Male, STEM)

As Qayum narrated, since his 'boss' or his supervisor has a connection with someone in the US, this could further increase his chances to complete his postdoctoral programme there. This suggests the sojourn in the UK had benefited him in terms of social capital he accumulated for his future aspiration, which is a postdoctoral opportunity. However, Qayum was also aware and concerned that his identity as a Muslim may affect his well-being in terms of safety and sense of belonging in New York due to the present socio-political conditions. This highlights the issue of religion as a potential restriction for his imagined future mobility.

8.4 Conclusion to the Chapter

What could be concluded from the findings presented in this chapter were the participants' future pathways in terms of their career choices as well as future mobility. These were somewhat predestined and bounded; however, the participants were also inevitably exhilarated and 'unrestrained' by particular individual possibilities and imaginations. The chapter also discussed how, in many ways, their sojourn in the UK had increased their capital accumulations and, thus, arguably increased their 'human' capital in neoliberalist terms. However, the participants were also confronted with the reality upon return where there could be field- specific advantage for doctorates, which is academia. Furthermore, there also seemed to be constraints in terms of opportunities in the workforce especially when it involved technology in the different spaces— Malaysia, the UK and elsewhere. This depicts the limited opportunities for the participants as adult learners to bring dimensions into their growth and life experiences not only to them, but also their family members as, at times, changes were also desired by the participants.

In terms of future mobility, it was found that family factors such as ageing parents and responsibilities to younger siblings, contracts with sponsors, and opportunities based on different fields could be constraints or fortifications for future mobility. The individuals were also bounded or constrained by aspects of their identity such as religious affiliations and socio-political conditions of the different localities. Thus, generally, despite the participants' aspirations and imaginations for opportunities that the destinations are able to offer for various capital accumulations, and previously inspired by these various forms of capital, they were also faced with contemplations for these various circumstances.

In conclusion, it could be suggested that the considerations that the participants have for their future in the study is beyond the push and pull factors, which are arguably generally capital accumulation purposes, but also bounded by personal responsibilities. For the participants, the social relations that the participants experienced during their sojourn play an important part in their lives to determine their future trajectories.

Chapter 9

Discussion and Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be discussing the themes generated from the findings presented in the previous chapters. This will be organised by 'answering' the research questions presented earlier in the Introduction. Besides that, I will also be outlining the contribution of the study to the policymakers and HEIs in the UK, as well as the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. At the individual level, the study would also benefit other Malaysians who are considering pursuing their doctoral studies in the UK in the future. The study also contributes interesting insights into the participants' online narratives from their Facebook accounts, which has added a different form of contemporary narrative to the study.

The overall aim of the study was to investigate Malaysian doctoral students' experiences in the UK. The study investigated the participants' motivations for studying abroad for their PhD degree, their lived experiences during their sojourn, as well as their future pathways upon completion.

Therefore, through a transnational and capital theory lens, the research questions for the present study were as follows:

1) What are the participants' motivations, purposes or aspirations for their sojourn for their PhD degrees?
2) How do the participants perceive their transnational sojourn abroad in relation to their living and learning experiences? What are the challenges that they face, and how do they navigate these challenges?
3) How do the participants imagine their future lives upon completion of their doctoral studies? In what ways does their study abroad affect the lives they envisioned in the future?

The study's epistemological perspective was interpretivism, with a constructionist ontological viewpoint. The study adopted a transnationalism lens in viewing the participants' micro-level lived experiences, as well as Bourdieu's theoretical tools (habitus, capital and field) to explore the participants' motivations in terms of cultural aspirations and imaginings. The study draws on interview data from 27 Malaysian PhD

students studying in the UK, supplemented by social media data from these participants.

Previous research on international students has tended to investigate more 'macro level' issues such as economic advantages and effects of policy on student mobility (Robertson, 2013). Although these studies are important to inform the future of HEIs in today's globalised arena, the perspectives of the international students themselves, particularly doctoral students, can be given less attention. This present study builds on existing studies on the lived experiences of international students, specifically from Malaysia, in the UK. Research studies on international students have established that international students tend to sojourn to the UK to accumulate various forms of advantages or 'capital'. This is particularly more important for undergraduate students, while for postgraduate students, especially in research, there are other various reasons involved as outlined in the present research. My study suggests that doctoral students' motivations for study abroad, besides more instrumental aspirations that can be directly cited on a CV, can include broader desires, for example the development of their professional identities, or the desire to benefit family or the wider community. The transnational and capital lens brings focus to the participants' lived experiences, especially by exploring capital aspirations, as well as habitus change, contemplations, challenges and resistance to dominant cultural discourses or prevalent assumptions.

Reflecting more broadly on the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapters, the following are the answers from the research:

9.2 Addressing the research questions

1) **What are the participants' motivations, purposes or aspirations for their sojourn for their PhD degrees?**

Supporting arguments in previous literature, aspirations for social and cultural capital are established as the main drivers for Malaysian doctoral students studying abroad (Brooks and Waters, 2011). Benefits such as highly valued symbolic world-class education (Findlay, et al., 2012), English language as well as cultural exposures, which would increase individuals' 'cosmopolitanism' and thus possibly translate into a 'competitive edge' in transnational labour markets were often cited as motivation by the sojourners, supporting previous literature (Rizvi, 2009; Rizvi, 2010; Sin, 2013; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015).

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 5, it was found that before their journey, the participants have imagined their lives in transition, and this is later confirmed or contradicted during their sojourn. On the point of imagining doctoral education, several of the participants often compare the UK as a destination alongside the US. However, due to their familiarity with the British UK system, which was pointed out by the majority of the participants, as well as concerns of time and sponsorship matters, the UK, in that sense, seemed a more attractive choice. Besides these reasons, a few participants also talked about their concerns regarding the socio-political conditions in the US, especially post-9/11 event, particularly the impact on Muslim society all over the world (as also mentioned by Asmar, 2005; Mostafa, 2006; King and Raghuram, 2012).

Furthermore, it was also found that the attractiveness of the UK HEIs related to providing 'science expenditure', which include advanced facilities and easy access to resources. Social capital attractions were also seen as highly important by participants, where they got to learn and work alongside the experts in their respective fields. It was also found from the study that this particular discourse was reported more prominently by participants in STEM than SSH fields.

Next, the majority of the participants narrated their aspirations for 'self-improvement', although I argue that this was not only or mainly related to personal motivations but, rather also or sometimes mainly, to help others. Bourdieu's theoretical tools of habitus, capital and field provide a useful lens to explore the complexity of the participants' motivations and imaginations through their narratives.

First of all, as Bourdieu's notion of capital discussed the importance of capital in terms of its accumulation and maintaining or reproducing status, the participants' socio-economic backgrounds play a major role in evaluating this. Based on previous studies, when discussing international students' pursuing degrees abroad, it has always in the majority of cases been for the purpose of acquiring capital. This, of course, has been recorded in myriad literature, especially for students moving from developing countries to those more developed, as well as in the case of the present research—from Malaysia to the UK. From a different angle, Bourdieu's theory also works if we think of Malaysian students as a nationally disadvantaged group in relation to more 'advantaged' countries, rather than focusing at an individual or family level. However, there are isolated cases where the movement is in contrast, as demonstrated in Brooks and Waters (2010).

As reflected earlier, the majority of the participants involved in the present study were financially sponsored by various national funding bodies and universities; meanwhile, one student was sponsored by the participant's parents. It is also important to note that all the participants sponsored by the government are identified as *bumiputera* (Sanskrit: 'sons of the soil'), which is also the majority ethnic group in Malaysia. In such cases, in comparison to the majority of previous research studies that use Bourdieu's lens, perhaps only one student sojourn was for the purpose of social class 'reproduction' on the familial level, while others who are supported by the Malaysian government are for the social class 'enhancement' of a particular ethnic group. This echoes Holloway et al. (2012) whereby the participants, although they came from comfortable families, were not financially equipped enough to support their children on their own to study abroad, especially to countries such as the UK. This conforms to Holloway et al.'s (2012) study, whereby, in different geographical spaces, class is experienced differently in certain countries. Similar to Kazakhstan (Ibid.), class is also intersected with religion and gender, in a Muslim dominated country. Hence, in such cases, for a country such as Malaysia, study abroad is most often supported by the Malaysian government. This is as a part of their National Higher Education Strategic Plan, 2020 (NHESP), which adopts UNESCO's aim for international education in terms of "(…) keeping pace with international education development" (Ministry of Education, 2013:3-5). From a student mobility point of view, Teichler (2017), stresses the importance of recognising between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' movement. Vertical student mobility would be students moving from a less academically and economically advantaged country to a better one; while, horizontal would be students moving from countries which are economically at par, in which the movement would mean benefit to see contrasting values, for example, between their home and host countries.

Furthermore, as articulated by the majority of the participants in the study, they also aspired to acquire various forms of capital, not only for themselves, but also for the purpose of benefiting others at various levels: their own families, as well as their society back home. This support's Smith's (2007) findings, in which sojourners in Sub-Saharan Africa aspired to give back to their sending countries in some ways. The participants in my study also demonstrated that the 'social remittances' that they intend to contribute are not only limited to their country, Malaysia, but also other countries besides the UK. This suggests that, although articulated by only a few of the students, it perhaps reflects how they see themselves as a global citizen, where their mobility is 'unbounded' (which was reflected in their narratives in Chapter 8).

Besides the contributions to the sending or 'home' country, the majority of the participants also articulated that it also benefited their families, especially parents. This could be seen through the parents' aspirations for their sons or daughters to pursue their doctoral education. As narrated by two male participants in the study, this is one of the ways for them to increase their families' social class to others in their vicinity back home. It also suggests the gendered roles in some ways as other female participants did not relate their intention for study abroad to how society would perceive their families. This suggests, in the case of the two male participants, they felt more pressure for the society's approval.

Besides the example above, there are other narratives from the participants, which suggest that the motivation for study abroad is gendered. Another recurrent theme would be 'mother's wishes' and 'mother's blessings'. This supports Nowoty (1981) and Reay's (2004b) extension of Bourdieu's notion of capital, 'emotional capital'. In Reay's study, she suggests that mothers play an important role in their children's educational attainment compared to the male parents. However, in the case of the participants in the study, I would argue that this is also intersected with religion, where, in Islam, one of the teachings is the importance of 'mothers' blessings'. It is suggested that for several of the participants, especially the single participants, the mothers at times invested in their children's education, and inevitably their future pathways. In one case, for example, a male participant's sojourn was encouraged by his wife.

Next, in other gendered narratives of motivation for study abroad for married participants, in relation to the gendered role of the husbands as 'providers' for their families, several married male participants narrated how their sojourn was motivated by their aspirations for their families. The male participants mentioned about enriching their families lives and offering them cultural exposure, 'wanting to spend more time with families' and also 'adding dynamics' to his wife and children's lives. In one particular case, for example, a male participant left his lucrative profession to ensure more 'family time'. This is less articulated by married women in the study; however, they narrated investment in their children's education during sojourn through their observation. This supports other studies that found that sojourns abroad benefit not only the students, but also their families (Waters, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2005).

What can be highlighted as a contribution to the current research in the field would be the importance of looking into other motivations for mobility beyond individual gain, in relation to students from geographical spaces where, for example, class is experienced

differently (Holloway, 2012). To the best of my knowledge, this is less stressed in previous studies in international education discourse.

In conclusion, as discussed in Chapter 5, transnationalism and Bourdieu's capital theory have helped me to look at the complexities in terms of motivations and purposes for study abroad as well as their imaginings. Furthermore, although all the participants expressed their desire for 'self-improvement' to a variable extent in terms of capital accumulation, this cannot be understood primarily in individualist terms but also to the extension of their relations to others, especially those significant in their lives. Lastly, the narratives for motivations for study abroad were also gendered, and intersected with various social positioning such as age, ethnicity, religion and social class. As experienced by the participants in my study, their imaginings of the transnational spaces in today's globalised world is, in some ways, limitless but, at the same time, bounded by the socio-political situations or 'assemblages of powers' (Robertson, 2013), as well as their social positioning and family responsibilities.

2) **How do the participants perceive their transnational sojourn abroad in relation to their living and learning experiences? What are the challenges that they face, and how do they navigate these challenges?**

For the second research question, I intend to answer these through the participants' narratives of their micro-level everyday lived experiences. Does this reflect their imaginings of their study abroad experiences thus far? In particular, I explored the issues surrounding their living and learning during study abroad. The issues significant to the participants are language, culture, religion, learning experiences, as well as relationships.

First of all, in terms of language experience, as reported in previous studies, it is the most prominent factor of international students' overall experiences during their study abroad. The majority of the participants draw on their experiences and dispositions in relation to language experiences from both their home and host countries. Overall, the majority of the participants perceived their language experience in the UK, in Scotland in particular, as positive. Individuals who are proficient in the English language are often valued at the workplace; however, the participants were also aware of the complexities of the status of the language within and between national contexts. Although proficiency in the language is prized in Malaysia, its practice must also be negotiated according to context. For example, language use in Malaysia is often perceived as connected, to some extent, to individuals' 'loyalty' to their Malaysian

identity. In this instance, I would like to draw on one particular case experience by a participant where, although good command of English language is valued by his employers, he was nevertheless critiqued due to his 'American accent'. However, being in a different space, for example in the UK, the English language, as perceived by the participants, is practiced as a way to 'survive'. Also, in this space, the identities of the participants as 'international students', 'foreigners' and 'second language speakers', although they are not necessarily appropriate 'labels', can act to their advantage when the labelling provides a 'safe space' for the participants to use the language without judgments and misconceptions. As discussed in the literature review[58] language is an important aspect of international students' adaptability to the UK. In this sense, language use in transnational spaces presents not only their identities and affiliations to their country, ethnicity and religion, but also influences their sense and way of belonging.

Besides that, all the participants documented across the interviews that there were interesting and amusing incidents regarding the Scottish accent and dialect, in particular. The majority of the participants were not used to the accent (and a few had not expected to have difficulties with understanding the language). This supports previous studies in relation to international students (Allen and Higgins, 1994; Mills, 1997). As demonstrated, the majority perceived that the English language would be spoken in the same accent they were exposed to in the media. The environment in Scotland, in particular, provided them with a more colloquial practice of the people in a particular national field. Although the majority of participants appreciated the cultural exposure, this particular instance also made them re-evaluate their previous habitus and competence as second language speakers of the English language (Fotovation and Miller, 2014). However, as many indicated, they were 'surprised' as they did not anticipate much difficulty with the language, and quickly adapted; however, a few participants indicated that they resorted to avoiding interacting with the local people to avoid misunderstanding and embarrassment.

The participants' experiences in relation to language are also gendered, in intersection with religion. This was clear in relation to the limited opportunities for language interactions to take place with native speakers, especially after working hours. For example, male Muslim participants reported socialising with their friends at pubs, compensating for the possible disjuncture with religious norms by avoiding alcohol. Meanwhile, the same situation was perceived to be more of a challenge for female participants as the majority of them thought that their hijab, as a physical

[58] See section 3.3.2

identification of themselves as Muslims, would make the experience difficult to 'manage'. However, although these actions are acceptable here (with some negotiations), it would not be acceptable and perceived negatively in their home country. The transnational spaces require the actors to carry themselves accordingly, as they also demonstrated. In this sense, the participants renegotiate their association of their previous habitus of places, for example, in the pubs, as a place to socialise, rather than simply a place for drinking alcohol, as it was perceived in Malaysia. These spaces also present the 'legitimate fields' according to Bourdieu (1985), where a few of the participants chose to shift their habitus in order to fit in and be seen as 'legitimate' within UK cultural spaces.

Complex cultural experiences are prevalent in transnational spaces. Aspects that I found important to highlight are experiences in relation to the participants' gender and religion, as well as their negotiations around legitimacy and 'fitting in' both 'here' and 'there'. Some participants narrated a few instances where they felt they lacked 'cultural awareness' (which we could describe in Bourdieu's terms as the formation of particular cultural habitus) to interact in informal situations in ways that made them feel comfortable and that they 'belonged'. On this point, humour seemed to be a dividing factor between the international and home students (Ryan and Viete, 2009; Fotovation, 2012). Besides that, in relation to culture, this has also affected the participants' dispositions on gender and sexuality. For instance, a number of the participants experienced shifting habitus regarding gender relations. Furthermore, being in the UK also changed some ideas about being a Muslim and people who are LGBT. Next, female participants who wear hijabs as identification of Islam as their religion found they were treated differently whilst in the UK by men. For example, they found that some home students seemed to be afraid to approach them (due to assumed Arabic Muslim's culture on gender distance). In another case, a female participant was expected to speak politely, not using vulgar language because of a home student's reading of her Muslim identity. These observations were not only experienced by women, but also men in the study. For example, a male participant felt 'more alive' with his interactions with women in the UK compared to with women back home. It was found that the majority of the participants see themselves as global citizens of the world, in this sense, cosmopolitan; however, they negotiate these conflicting cultural ideals and dispositions—which suggest, to some extent, restraints. Hence, these negotiations by drawing on various resources from both home and host countries suggest the transnational lives of the sojourners. These experiences, also in many ways, demonstrate intersectionality.

The participants' experiences in relation to religion are also prevalent in the empirical findings. Although, as pointed out in Chapter 5, the participants' level of piety varied, the participants in the study indicated a stronger connection to their beliefs. In this case, the sojourn in the UK has increased their dependence on God, as this offers a sense of support to the participants (Abdullah, 2011, Astin, et al. 2011). Hence, besides cultural and social capital that the participants aspire to during their study abroad, faith capital as a form of social capital can be acquired by the participants unconsciously. It is found that faith capital (see section 6.4) although not considered initially as part of their aspired capital sojourn in the UK, became one of the important aspects in the majority of the participants' daily transnational lives – partly due to loss of social networks, which included family and friends in their home country. This particular finding has further extended Bourdieu's capital theory where, in terms of experiences of this study's participants in particular, the participants constantly sought opportunities and social relationships through various spiritual activities to not only strengthen their cultural practices, but also to strengthen their spiritual needs. This also inevitably resulted in the participants seeking relationships with their co-nationals due to similar religious beliefs and practices.

For example, the participants joined *usrah* and *tadarus* activities to increase their knowledge about their religion. Furthermore, several participants also mentioned that they tend to practise more during their sojourn as compared to the UK. A number of the participants also mentioned that they miss hearing the *'adzan'* (call for prayers) that they usually hear back home. These showed the participants are trying to recreate their cultural norms, in this sense, religious practices, to recreate a sense of familiarity and home, as well as maintaining their cultural identity (Abdullah, 2011; Ganga, 2005, Fortier, 2000). In terms of religion, from my analysis, these experiences are also gendered. Besides practical religious practice, such as differences in terms of preparing for prayers (ablution), and being 'creative' with spaces for prayers, more women than men discuss their religious practice changes than men during the interviews. Perhaps, this is also due to the fact that men are still connected via weekly Friday prayers, which are not compulsory for women. For women, they have to create religious gatherings to fill the void that they may have for religious practices.

Participants also discussed what can be described as a habitus shift in terms of how they experienced learning in the UK compared to when they were in Malaysia. While all the participants accepted the changes they have to make in order to 'fit in' with the new environment, several still felt that the changes were challenging to them. The majority of the participants indicated the overwhelming freedom that they have with their

projects. For the majority of the participants who previously worked before continuing their doctoral studies, the transition from worker to student was not easy. This is also the case for participants who are married. However, the flexibility of doing the research was perceived positively as well, especially to those who had their families with them during their sojourn.

Relationships with supervisors were also experienced differently, supporting other work on research students (e.g., Du et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2012; Son and Park, 2014; Soong, et al., 2015). For example, the expected power distance between authoritative figures and others was seen as starkly different in Malaysia and in the UK. To illustrate this, the culture in the UK HEIs is to address supervisors without their title of Doctor or Professor, which is regarded as being rude back home and also in other Asian cultures, as similarly observed in Myles and Cheng (2003). The majority of the participants renegotiated this; however, a few resisted and insisted on addressing their supervisors by their titles to 'keep the distance'. However, on this matter, a few participants who had more working experience felt indifference regarding the matter, and it could be inferred that this is due to their age and past working experiences, where they have also acquired higher status; thus, it was not difficult for them to adjust to a more minimised power distance style in the UK.

In terms of research experience, besides having more freedom, as addressed earlier, a participant indicated that what he could also observe was the contrasting 'thinking culture'. He perceived that although Malaysia has similar technology and equipment, it is difficult to move forward because of less creative thinking to initiate new projects, as compared to the UK. He also mentioned how his supervisor was 'positive' even with bad experiment results with his positive attitude towards the results. This is something in contrast to what he had experienced in Malaysia. Although this is an isolated case, this narrative is important to put forward as it could be a potential avenue for future investigation.

Next, as part of their doctoral training, a few of the participants also had the chance to become GTAs in their respective departments. It is also important to note that from the present study, more participants in STEM than in SSH fields were offered this experience. Overall, all the participants indicated that they value the experiences they gained from their tenure as GTAs. Despite being paid for the tenure, all the participants indicated that they value the social capital gain from the experience rather than financial. However, in one particular case, a participant indicated that he felt inferior to his students, who were in the majority home students, due to his language

competency, albeit during the initial period. Another participant, on the other hand, had to change from a more authoritative approach that she was used to back home to a more 'western' approach as advised by her colleagues. Similarly reflected in this section, in terms of learning and navigating academia, they had to shift their habitus so some extent to adapt to their new environment. Although, as reflected by a few participants who adopt, negotiate, or resist, these experiences are also agentic to a certain degree, within particular constraints.

In terms of the participants' social networks during their sojourn, the majority of the participants socialised with others from the same cultural backgrounds; the participants felt that this made adapting to the new environment easier and also by having cultural events such as Eid together, they are able to recreate their experiences back home in the host country. Besides that, due to similar cultures, a few participants mentioned about going to their co-nationals for help with practical concerns such as helping with assembling furniture, finding accommodation, language problems, visa, and fieldwork matters in Malaysia. However, one of the disadvantages would be too much comfort and dependence on other co-nationals would jeopardise their opportunities to socialise with other home students as well as other international students, which suggest less cultural contact to some extent—and 'intercultural transformation' (Kim, 2001), or cosmopolitanism development (Ward and Searle, 1991). Next, other factors affecting the participants' socialisation process with the local society during their sojourn would be the participants' work responsibilities as doctoral students and for married participants, their roles as husbands or wives and also parental roles (for those who have children). This factor also influenced the participants' intercultural interactions with their colleagues (Brooks, 2013; Phelps, 2016).

Also, technology, especially social media, has changed how sojourners 'do' and maintain their social ties with others transnationally. It was found that the majority of the participants present themselves 'positively' online, and from the narratives, the participants do not want their families back home to worry about them (Constantine et al., 2005; Heppner et al., 2006). Thus, there is a dislocation between what is presented online with what the participants are actually experiencing and feeling, which involves a filter, to some extent. This resonates with Goffman (1959) who notes that presentations of self invariably involve certain decisions by 'actors' relating to how they would like to be 'read' by others, in face-to-face encounters as well as online.

Another contribution would be the combination of interview analysis with analysis of texts from the participants' social media, in this case Facebook status updates. As

addressed earlier, the participants' activities on their social media varied from one person to the next. However, these 'short stories' documented online reported 'in the moment' experiences during their sojourn. There were interesting comments on day-to-day observations that illuminated aspects of the transnational lives that they live, at least in the ways they would like to present their 'self' to others online, which also underpin ways in which they seemingly maintain cultural perceptions from their homeland. This is possibly due to the multiple potential audiences. This illustrates the notion of the sojourners' sense of cosmopolitanism, whereby they do not have to fully conform to complete adaptation into the cultures of the host country but, instead, draw resources from both home and host countries to fit a variety of situations. According to Nussbaum (1997), education, to a greater or lesser extent, can encourage learning from others of different backgrounds, and this does not mean having to give up the individuals' dispositions and beliefs in order to embrace new life experiences to become a 'citizen of the world', as illustrated in the findings. Also, the experiences documented in the chapters suggest that these experiences are gendered, and also intersected with other aspects of the participants' identities and social positioning.

Lastly, the final theme that is woven throughout the participants' narratives due to the shifting continents, despite the perceived romanticised picture as sojourners, shifting of habitus, to 'fit in' in their new environment and institutions would be the precarity of 'class' in the transnational spaces. In this sense, how is class being perceived in the different countries—between home and host countries—especially for sojourners as international students? For the majority of the participants in the study, they experienced 'loss' in terms of class as international students in the host country due to their nationality—to some extent. The privileges that they have previously enjoyed in their home country made them realise and served to amplify their identity as international students, as non-traditional students in UK HEIs and the host community in a wider context, which affected their transnational experiences; this agrees with Reay's (2010) study on non-traditional students in UK HEIs. Hence, this suggests the experience of loss of privileges and class when in the host country, especially due to their ethnicity and, to some extent, nationality and religious affiliations especially in their academic institutions' settings of white and middle class dominance.

3) **How do the participants imagine their future lives upon completion of their doctoral studies? In what ways does their study abroad affect the lives they envisioned in the future?**

Finally, Chapter 8 explored the future pathways that participants' envisioned. The majority of the participants in the study expressed that they are required to return to their home country upon completion. As the majority of the participants were sponsored by the government university teaching schemes (F1), they are attached to various public HE institutions in Malaysia. For others who were funded by other government bodies, they were not attached to Malaysian HEIs; however, they envisioned a career in academia in one way or another. The majority of the participants also indicated that the opportunities in Malaysia for doctorate holders are limited to research and university lecturing positions.

The career pathways that the participants indicated are also gendered. More women expressed their decision for a teaching-focused career in academia than men. A few others who have been in academia also expressed their decision to explore other options, although they realise that the desirable opportunities outside academia are limited for doctoral graduates. A few of the participants indicated considering staying in the UK or elsewhere to venture other opportunities available, from the information they gathered through formal and informal conversations with their colleagues from home and other countries. This suggests the variable opportunities for doctoral students in transnational spaces, facilitated by being globally interconnected.

Next, in terms of the participants' imaginings of their future mobility, the majority expressed their decision to return to Malaysia, this being due to the careers predetermined in conjunction with their scholarship agreements. Others indicated their desire to serve their country in one way or another, as well as their family obligations. A few of the participants described considerations of various pull and push factors. Single women indicated that marriage is also a concern as a future contemplation influencing future career and mobility. This was expressed less by single men in the study. However, a few of the participants expressed their concerns about feeling like a 'fish out of water' in their own home country due to the doctoral training they received and 'the way they think' after their sojourn, which might promote conflict. The majority of the participants also indicated what post-colonial thinkers describe as acquiring 'new eyes' in viewing their home country after being away for a while, which also evokes the feeling to return (Asher, 2005).

Several participants indicated their aspiration to stay in the UK. Some mentioned that they would consider staying in order to pay off their study loans, and due to the higher exchange rate, this would benefit them in terms of paying off the loans quicker. Others mentioned about being used to the 'western' education and experience, which led to them to imagining fitting in better with the working culture here. A few of the participants who are bonded to HEIs in Malaysia also expressed the possibility of returning to the UK, which suggests transnational liminality. While others mentioned the reason for return due to family, this is in contrast a reason to stay for one participant in my study. This further highlights a theme in my study, that family is one of the most important mobility considerations for the sojourners. In a variety of ways, then, the participants in the study demonstrate how the transnational lives they have experienced so far have affected the ways they envisioned and imagined their lives in the future.

Precariousness also arises not only experienced due to day-to-day micro level encounters, but also affecting the sojourners' future trajectories. The participants articulated this as one of the major deciding factors for return-stay factor. First, the precarity of the participants' identities against the background of the more dominant ethnicities, cultures and especially religion – as Muslims - affected their decision to stay in the host country. Second, the precariousness of their futures—job opportunities for PhD holders in their home country are also contemplated. It is also important to note that what the participants envisioned in their future at times is in conflict with the reality of the pathways that they finally embark upon at the end of their studies. The futures that the participants are painting are constantly being renegotiated with their ever-changing dispositions and external considerations, which include most predominantly responsibilities towards family especially ageing parents and contracts with employers. However, this is intersected with social positioning, most notably due to the participants' age, gender and marital status.

In conclusion, in imagining their future pathways and mobility, their sojourn in the UK has opened various possibilities. Even for the majority of the participants whose career pathways in academia are locked, a few of the participants, especially participants who are still single, envisioned working in industry, in the UK and elsewhere. However, these imaginings for future careers and pathways also indicate intersectionality and agency.

9.3 Contributions of the thesis

As a novice researcher, I hope my thesis adds to the existing knowledge in the education field. First of all, by exploring the perspectives of international doctoral students from Malaysia; this adds to the breadth of literature of the experiences of the students from different geographical spaces and especially by focusing on international doctoral students it helps to redress a comparative gap in our knowledge of this group in comparison to undergraduate and taught postgraduate international students. It is important to explore the sojourners' lived motivations, experiences and future trajectories from a multicultural country such as Malaysia, with its special historical background and post-colonial links to the UK. According to the statistics, Malaysia is the fourth top sending country to the UK, however, few studies in the literature focus on the experience of Malaysian students. Besides that, throughout the thesis, I have kept in mind the relevance of technology and its affect as, in itself, a condition (Boccagni, 2011) and social media in the participants' daily lives as today's sojourners. This could be seen in the thought process in developing the theoretical framework for the thesis, the methodology, and is also reflected in the findings in the thesis.

Secondly, the present study used online data from the participants' Facebook 'status updates' to explore the 'presentations of self' in these texts as an under-utilised way to gather a perspective on their lived experience. This added some interesting data, highlighting 'in the moment' experiences of the students, which are sometimes 'forgotten' or simply did not cross the participants' minds during the interview sessions. From my experience, these narratives are valuable, especially in illustrating the participants' 'inbetweenness' and their habitus' while in the UK and away from their home country. However, on the flipside, I also learnt that I needed to be ethically sensitive as to the use and handling of the data I gathered from my participants' social media.

Next, the contribution of the thesis to existing research studies in the international students field would be the theoretical frameworks that I applied to interpret the participants' lived experiences as sojourners. First, I applied Bourdieu's capital theory as well as transnationalism theory in my study. Although Bourdieu's theory is commonly used in various social research studies, especially in international students' motivations and experiences during study abroad, as mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, the transnationalism lens is usually applied in Migration and Urban Studies to investigate migrants' experiences and much less in Education, especially student-migrant research studies; yet, this perspective provides a rich explanatory lens in which to understand the complexity of the students' experience. Furthermore, the 'bifocal' ways of not only

the sojourners' experiences, but also their emotional ways of being are important for analysis. Post-colonialism theory provides the lens to delve into the participants' experiences and thinking due to prior dispositions linked between the home and host countries. There is a strong link between education with UK as a hegemonic power of education provider to its colonial legacies – in this case, Malaysia. However, the participants demonstrate ambivalence in their transnational ways - that they are not passive receiver of colonised assumptions and consumptions – but are selective in drawing cultural and cultural resources contextually. I hope that this intrigued more future research studies with similar historical backgrounds to apply post-colonial lens. Finally, intersectionality is an essential lens that recognises the backgrounds of the participants involved, such as age, gender, religious affiliations and other factors that may or may not affect the participants' experiences during their sojourn.

Finally, the findings of the research contribute to the growing research studies in the field. The thesis's particular focus on Malaysian PhD students revealed the many unique ways of how people from the particular country make sense of their everyday lives by constantly drawing on sources and information from their home and host countries and create relationships and maintain relationships strategically. Although cultural capital is perceived to be readily accessible, due to intersectional factors, notably gender, marital status and their status as PhD students, at times, are perceived to be factors affecting their lived experiences during their time abroad. Findings from their social media, Facebook, also revealed interesting insights on the participants' lives. The impromptu online documentations of everyday lived experiences are particularly relevant in today's sojourners lives, and could be further developed and employed in future studies.

9.4 Implications of the research

Based on the present study, I would like to make several recommendations to policymakers in the UK and Malaysia, HEIs in the UK, as well as international students, especially Malaysian students in the UK.

9.4.1 Implications for international students

The present study illuminated the experiences of Malaysian doctoral students in the UK. This information would benefit future prospective Malaysian students who intend to pursue their studies in the UK as the present study discussed the experiences of the students in terms of the challenges that the individuals may face. In acquiring various

forms of capital from their international education, the sojourners should equip themselves with some knowledge for what is in store in the future. What was clearly illustrated, especially through a transnational lens, is the way international students are constantly drawing dispositions and experiences from home and host countries to various contexts.

For Malaysian students who are Muslims, the consequences of their physical appearance, especially more often to women than men, at times could affect their sociocultural experiences. It was reported (from previous literature as well as the few participants who are open to talk about it) that for a few of the participants it is a sensitive and vulnerable experience and most people are conscious not to talk about 'the bad' or migro aggression incidents as also revealed in the research. The reasons include not portraying international students as a vulnerable group and not to worry families and friends back home. Thus, it is also important to pay attention to issues 'not really openly discussed' by the students. On this point, international students should know that they should report the cases and seek help from the relevant authorities.

The language barrier is also found to be one of the problems faced by the students, despite having fulfilled the language requirements. One of the issues reported by the participants in the study is understanding the accent of the local people. Due to this, it is recommended that the media reflects a broader range of accents in the UK, and that educational systems draw on more of a range of accents when teaching the English language.

Additionally, the changing of spaces from home to host country also means that international students are facing a range of contrasting educational and sociocultural experiences, as well as a long history of embedded practices. Thus, international students are suggested to practice flexibility and renegotiate their dispositions depending on various contexts, which would help them achieve their goals while abroad.

9.4.2 Implications for policymakers and institutions

First of all, for the institutions in Malaysia, providing more exposure to future prospective students to better equip themselves before their sojourn. Besides the educational factors, it is also helpful for the students to be informed of some of the contrasting sociocultural differences and practical facilities, in terms of their availability and services offered. This would ensure better adaptability in the host

country. Instead of the stress being on the UK HE institutions to accommodate international students, the students should be responsible and more active in their adaptation in the host country.

In terms of educational preparations before sojourn, Malaysian institutions could also offer more language preparatory classes for potential students especially in terms of exposure to a variety of English language accents and dialects. Additionally, future students also need to be informed of the contrasting learning, especially research cultures, between Malaysia and the UK. Besides the stress on being more independent in their research projects, it would be helpful to also stress the basic knowledge of conducting research and also specifically for students who have left the education system for a while, to ease the transition from being employees to students, refresher courses before sojourn would benefit them greatly.

Next, the policymakers could revise the transferability of degrees between sending and receiving countries. The recognisability of the degrees could, in some ways, affect individuals in the job markets in both countries, as found in the present study. This recognition of transferrable degrees, skills, and knowledge globally would increase the opportunities for the movement of graduates especially doctoral students in the transnational labour markets globally.

Furthermore, some revision of the immigration policies between both receiving and sending countries would be beneficial for student mobility. This is another crucial factor that influences inflow and outflow of student-migrants in the UK, Malaysia and elsewhere. Transnationalism, as demonstrated in the present research, illuminates the importance of supporting international students by providing them with elements that support their socio-cultural activities in their home countries. It was found that for better integration in the host country, the institutions in the host country could provide more spaces for the international students to socialise and maintain their socio-cultural activities.

For example, in terms of religious activities, it is suggested that the institutions could provide support by providing more spaces for the international students to practice their beliefs. Providing prayer and ablution areas, for example, would benefit the students not only to practice their beliefs but, also subsequently, their studies and their community as well. The existence of these spaces would also increase their sense of belonging by supporting their ways of being in the host country. By acknowledging their ‘existence’ by providing these spaces around the institutions, these students would feel

acknowledged and have a sense of belonging to the rest of the institution. This, in some ways perhaps, would also eliminate the feelings of 'alienation' and 'otherness' that are often discussed in the literature surrounding international students and that has been supported in my study.

Next, staff and home students at UK HEIs could also be more aware and understanding of international students' experiences and challenges. In this sense, as much as the international students are expected to shift from their previous habitus to fit in with their new environment, to some extent, cosmopolitanism through intercultural interactions, essentially, is not only one-way, it involves both parties. Furthermore, for research students specifically, they are in a disjuncture between fitting into western institutions' egalitarian approach to research as compared to their home country. Finding a balance in satisfying the two 'fields of games' according to Bourdieu, or spaces, is vital for the participants in achieving their academic goals and future trajectories, as similarly pointed out by Rizvi (2010).

9.5 Recommendations for future research

Being a novice researcher, as I navigate further into my study, there are several ways to improve the study. First of all, a longitudinal study would offer more insights into the participants' experiences. By doing so, we might be able to see whether and how far their dispositions regarding a few of the issues discussed in the study may evolve over the course of their sojourn in the UK. However, it was not possible in the present study due to time constraints. Secondly, an ethnographic approach would also be valuable to investigate the study as it could offer more depth of understanding; however, similarly due to time, it was not possible in the present study. As this topic is close to what I am experiencing, being a research student in the UK, an auto ethnographic approach could probably also add to the richness of the data.

Next, it was found in the present research, doctoral students who are married have myriad responsibilities and expectations from their transnational families; this may be an intriguing research topic in future. Also, on the topic of sojourning families, future research studies could look into the experiences of participants' dependents' experiences during sojourn: husbands or wives of the student-migrants as well as their children. Their gendered practices (husbands or wives) could change from what they are used to in the different spaces compared to when they were in their home countries. Besides the spouses, the children's experiences during their stay is also an interesting avenue for research. For children who already started schooling before their sojourn

with their family, the transition to a new country and different field could probably offer different normative gender practices that may constrain them to play a different 'game'.

9.6 Reflections from my research journey

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths"- Walt Disney

If I could point out one of the most important things I have learnt in this journey, which I have learnt the hard way, is that flexibility and true grit are essential in moving forward. For the longest period I was stuck on my initial plan for research, that I was trying to make work regardless the 'uneasiness' that I felt at times. But it is through this uncomfortable and challenging process that a person is be able to continue to grow and develop. The data gathering process, as I discussed earlier in the methodology chapter, was very challenging for me.

Although when I reflected on my experience during these months, I really enjoyed the discussion I had with my participants, at the same time I felt that I had to challenge myself through the process. However, I am glad that I pushed myself, and proved to myself that I could do it, despite a few setbacks. After my data gathering process, it was so easy to lose myself in the abundance of data.

Another important thing that I have learnt throughout the PhD process is the importance of thinking 'outside the box'. This is an important skill to bring something 'fresh' in the myriad existing research. From the research-planning phase to the writing up stage, I have learnt a lot along the way to open up to new ideas and different ways to look at things. Even when I face challenges that I encountered, unexpected findings, for example, could be considered as 'interesting' data in my research. I also learnt to let go of issues beyond my control, and not only rely on Plan A, but prepare Plan B and C if necessary.

I have also become a more confident person every day in my journey. My life as a sojourner not only taught me to be more confident in my work, but also in my everyday life. I learned to have more confidence in my work and learn to take ownership of my work. As emerged in many of the instances through my participants' narratives, I was also struck by the extent of independence that I had for my research project, which I perceived as empowering. Although through the literature I reviewed it is apparent that

aspects of the learning culture in the UK is very different from what I was used to, it was not until I experienced it first-hand that I realised that it was challenging for me to adapt to my new environment. However, I felt that this experience has made me grow so much not only as a researcher, but also as a person as a whole. In conclusion, besides everything that I discussed above, I am so grateful for all that I have learnt in my PhD process. As a student-migrant, living a transnational life myself, I gained more understanding of my journey as well. Although I am sad leaving this chapter of my life in Glasgow, I am excited for what the future holds!

APPENDIX 1- Participants' Background Information

Participant	Marital Status	Field	Previous Employment	HE Institution
Sarah	Single	STEM	Industry	S1
Hanah	Married	SSH	University tutor	S1
Raudah	Single	SSH	University tutor	S1
Fira	Married	STEM	University tutor	S1
Wahida	Single	SSH	Industry	S2
Lily	Married	SSH	University lecturer	S1
Siti	Married	STEM	University tutor	S1
Maria	Single	STEM	University lecturer	S1
Leah	Single	SSH	University tutor	S1
Faezah	Single	STEM	University lecturer	S1
Fina	Single	SSH	Industry	S1
Lisa	Married	SSH	Industry	S1
Saleha	Married	STEM	Industry	S1
Mazni	Single	STEM	University lecturer	S1
Kirin	Single	SSH	Industry	S1

Female participants' background information

Participant	Marital Status	Field	Previous Employment	HE Institution
Alif	Married	SSH	Industry	S1
Faliq	Married	STEM	Industry	S3
Hamid	Single	STEM	Student	S1
Nasir	Married	STEM	Industry	S3
Farid	Single	STEM	Industry	S1
Azlan	Single	SSH	University tutor	S1
Darius	Married	STEM	University lecturer	S1
Fahmi	Married	STEM	Industry	S1
Lee	Single	STEM	Student	S1
Qayum	Single	STEM	University tutor	S1
Ahmad	Married	SSH	Industry	S1
Walid	Single	STEM	Student	S1

Male participants' background information

APPENDIX 2- Participants' Sponsor and Gender

Participants' sponsor				
Gender	F1	F2	F3	F4
Male	7	3	1	1
Female	9	6	-	-
Total	15	9	1	1

Based on the table above, majority of the participants were funded by national funding bodies (F1 and F2). The participants who were funded by F1 were mostly previously worked at various HEIs in Malaysia or other government institutions or received funding under the 'young lecturer's scheme' by the HEIs in Malaysia. These participants were required to serve the government based on their scholarships' agreements upon completion of their doctoral degrees. Meanwhile, participants who received scholarship from F2 were not attached with any institutions, but they are required to return upon completion as well. For the participants who were funded by the F3 and F4, they were not attached with any institutions or government bodies. This overview representation of the participants' funding bodies and overall descriptions of their scholarships' agreements are vital to give an overall picture of the participants' backgrounds and their future pathways that could contribute to their lived experiences that intended to be investigated in this thesis.

APPENDIX 3- Participants' Social Network During Sojourn

Female	First Circle	Second Circle	Third Circle
Sarah	Best friends in Malaysia	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	/
Hanah	Hometown friends	/	Old friends from University and firm
Raudah	PhD friends	PhD friends Friends in Glasgow	
Fira	Friends in Glasgow	Friends in the UK	Friends in Malaysia
Wahida	Boyfriend	Flatmate	Girlfriends
Lily	Friends in the UK and best friends in Malaysia	/	Others
Siti	Secondary school friends	University friends in present University and alma matter	/
Maria	Malaysian flatmate and friend	Best friends in Malaysia	/
Leah	Malaysian flatmates	Best friends in the UK and Malaysia	Non-Malay friends
Faezah	*Tadarus* group, Malaysian friends in Glasgow	Officemates and schoolmates, KMG (Malaysian Community in Glasgow)	/
Fina	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	Local friends in the UK	Host in the UK, ex-colleagues and boss
Lisa	Husband and cats	Family in Malaysia	
Saleha	Husband and children	Doctors in GU recreational friends	Business friends, *Tadarus* friends
Mazni	Family	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	Friends in Malaysia
Kirin	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	/	/

Male	First Circle	Second Circle	Third Circle
Alif	Wife and children	Family	/
Faliq	Wife and children	Friends in Scotland	/
Hamid	High school friends	Friends in Edinburgh	/
Nasir	Malaysian friends in Edinburgh	Officemate from China	Malaysian friends in Scotland
Azlan	Male Malaysian friends in Scotland	/	Former students in Malaysia
Darius	Male Malaysian friends in Glasgow	/	/
Fahmi	Male Malaysian friends in Glasgow	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	/
Lee	European girlfriend	European and Scottish friends	/
Qayum	Family in Malaysia, Friends in Malaysia Former colleagues	Friends in the UK	/
Ahmad	Friends in Malaysia	/	/
Walid	Friends in Malaysia	Muslim friends	Friends in Malaysia
Farid	Malaysian friends in Glasgow	/	/

APPENDIX 4 - Participants' Future Career Choices

Future career choice		Participant	Field/Gender
Academia	Research	Hamid	STEM/Male
		Darius	STEM/Male
		Fahmi	STEM/Male
		*Lee	STEM/Male
		Qayum	STEM/Male
		*Saleha	STEM/Female
	Teaching	Azlan	SSH/Male
		Ahmad	STEM/Male
		Siti	STEM/Female
		Fira	STEM/Female
		Faezah	STEM/Female
		Leah	SSH/Female
		Maria	STEM/Female
		Lily	SSH/Female
		Sarah	STEM/Female
		Hanah	SSH/Female
		Raudah	SSH/Female
Industry	Government	Alif	SSH/Male
		Faliq	STEM/Male
		Wahida	SSH/Female
	Private companies	Nasir	STEM/Male
		Farid	STEM/Male
		Walid	STEM/Male
		Mazni	STEM/Female
Undecided		Fina	SSH/Female
		Lisa	SSH/Female
		Kirin	SSH/Female

* Participants were offered positions at the University upon PhD completions

APPENDIX 5- Participants' Future Mobility

Future mobility	Participant	Field/Gender/Relationship Status
Malaysia	Alif	SSH/Male/Married
	Faliq	STEM/Male/Married
	Darius	STEM/Male/Married
	Fahmi	STEM/Male/Married
	Hanah	SSH/Female/Married
	Raudah	SSH/Single
	Fira	STEM/Female/Married
	Lily	SSH/Female/Married
	Maria	STEM/Female/Single
	Leah	SSH/Single
	Faezah	STEM/Female/Single
	Mazni	STEM/Female/Single
	Siti	STEM/Female/Married
	Kirin	SSH/Female/Single
Scotland/United Kingdom		
	Nasir	STEM/Male/Married
	Azlan	SSH/Male/Single
	Lee	STEM/Male/Single
	Ahmad	STEM/Male/Married
	Walid	STEM/Male/Single
	Sarah	STEM/Female/Single
	Wahida	SSH/Single
	Lisa	SSH/Female/Married
	Saleha	STEM/Female/Married
	Fina	SSH/Female/Single
Elsewhere		
Other Asian countries	Hamid	STEM/Male/Single
New York	Qayum	STEM/Male/Single
New Zealand, Australia or Canada	Farid	STEM/Male/Single

APPENDIX 6- Interview Guide

Background Information

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. How long have you been in the UK?
3. Why did you decide to study in the UK? Why did you decide to study in the UK? What are your motivation and expectations studying in the UK? Why a PhD in the UK?
4. Can you give me some information about your background (parents' occupations, upbringing)?
5. What are your sources of financial support for your studies here in the UK?
6. What is your educational and occupational background?

Language, Identity, Religion & Culture

1. How many languages do you speak?
2. When did you start learning English?
3. How proficient were you when you arrived here?
4. Do you remember any incidents regarding language encounters here?
5. Do you have stories of misunderstandings or anything significant that occurred during your communication encounters here? (could be something funny or embarrassing?)
6. Can you describe what it means to be a Malaysian to you? What makes you Malaysian? (in what sense is religion important to you? In what sense are traditions/values/norms important in your culture?)
7. What does it means to be a Malaysian abroad? A Malaysian as an international student abroad?
8. What were some of the biggest challenges? Please share some of your experiences.
9. Was language a concern at all? Scottish accent?
10. Tell me more about how you feel as Malaysian here in the UK? Have you changed?
11. What are the things that feel change or not changing? If so, in what ways?
12. Who are the people that you are in contact with here? Can you share a little bit about your circle of friends? Are you drawn to gender, nationality, language proficiency? (Ask participants to complete a sociogram[59])
13. What do you miss about Malaysia? What do you do to feel better? What are your coping strategies when you feel homesick or lonely?

Malaysian HE Students' perceptions of language use in relation to social identities such as gender, social class, ethnicity and nationality.

1. Are there differences of the way you feel/experience being around men/women? Are there differences when you were in Malaysia and the UK?
2. If so, are there other differences that make a difference to this (eg class, ethnicity, nationality?)
3. Reflecting on your own language practice, do you think you use more masculine or feminine language? Does it change in different contexts?
4. Do you think that you have changed in any ways now that you are in the UK?
5. How about your language practice? Has it changed in any ways?
6. Do you have any problems in practising your religion here? What are the things that differ as compared to when you were in Malaysia?

The relationship between language practice and students' construction, perception and experience of inequalities of power in social interactions: online vs. face-to-face communication.

1. In general, when do you feel comfortable speaking English?
2. In general, when do you feel uncomfortable speaking English? (In what situations/places/times do you feel uncomfortable?)
3. What opportunities do you think you have to speak English with native speakers of English? And with non-native speakers of English?
4. Between native and non-native speakers of English, whom do you think you will have more chances to talk with? Why? How do you feel when talking with native and non-native speakers?
5. Do you feel differently when you are speaking in different languages?
6. How do you feel about being a bilingual/multilingual? Is it an asset? In what ways?
7. Have you noticed any differences in the way that you communicate in terms of politeness with people of different status?
8. Do you use Facebook as a medium to keep in touch with your family in Malaysia?
9. How much do you share with your friends/family of your experience back home through Facebook? What are the things that you share with them?

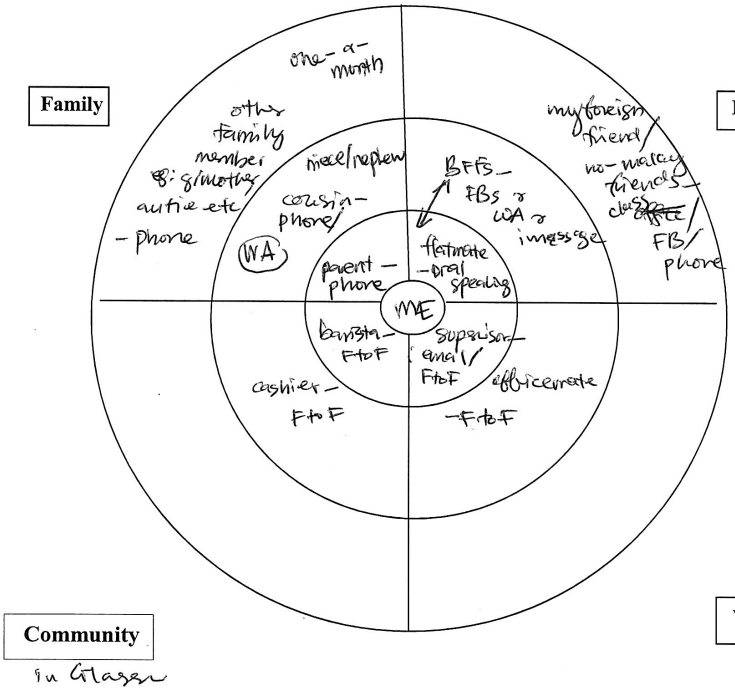
The implications for Malaysian students' conceptions of 'belonging' and 'comfortableness' at university in the UK.

1. How comfortable do you feel studying in the UK?
2. What is your opinion about the educational experience you have received here in the UK so far as compared to Malaysia? How do they differ? (Academic abilities, English Language abilities, cultural, world/global view, freedom/independence, social network (connection/friendship/relationship with others etc.
3. How is your relationship with Malaysians in the UK? Malaysians from different ethnicity? How about UK students and students from different countries? If so, how and in what ways?
4. In your experience, how comfortable do you feel as a student here? Have you ever felt differently when socialising with different people or in different contexts?
5. What do you really like or dislike about the UK and your home country (or anywhere else you've lived)?
6. What differences have you noticed between your culture and UK culture, and how do you deal with the differences?
7. In what ways do you think the University could help to make you feel more comfortable/ your experience here better?
8. Would you consider staying in UK after you graduated? (why or why not? Why is it important to return to Malaysia?)
9. Are there certain things that you wish you know or do to better prepare
10. youself before coming to the UK? What are the preparations that you do before coming to the UK? What are your advice to future students who intend to continue their studies in the UK?

Thank you for your cooperation and time. Do you have any questions for me?

Follow up questions (via email): Issues discussed during face-to-face interviews and future plans.

Appendix 7- Participant's Sociogram (Sample)



APPENDIX 8- Participant Information Sheet

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Study title and Researcher Details

Constructing Identity Online: An Investigation of Malaysian Students' Use of Computer-Mediated Communication (working title)

Researcher: Nuramira Anuar (n.anuar.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Principal Supervisor: Dr Barbara Read (Barbara.Read@glasgow.ac.uk)

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to look at the use of Facebook amongst Malaysian students studying at universities in Scotland. The study will be for the duration of 12 months from July 2015 – July 2016.

Why have I been chosen?

You are a Malaysian student studying at the universities in Scotland, so you would be perfect for the study! Including you, a total of 30 students will be participating in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. All you have to do is just inform me at any point during the duration of the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

For the purpose of the study, the researcher will set up a Facebook account in which any interactions regarding the study between the researcher and participants will be managed. If you agree to be one of the participants for the study, I will send you a friend request and after you have accepted, you would be able to view the researcher's profile.

Upon accepting my friend request, you will be asked to sign a consent form to be one of the participants for the research. The research process will start after the desired number of participants for the study is recruited (30). There are two phases to this study, which will be explained as follow:

In the first phase, the researcher will be part of online social space in which observations will be made on these three main Facebook features: 1) Status updates/ wall posts 2) Info 3) Profile photo. I would like to assure you that as the researcher, I will not share this information with anyone, and my observation is passive in which I will not be interacting with you in any way such as posting comments on your wall or photos. These Facebook data will be gathered and analysed for the purpose of the study.

Next, in the second phase of the study, you will be emailed to arrange a date and time for us to meet. In this occasion, I will be interviewing you about your perception on language use, attitudes and self-presentation on Facebook. This will be approximately one hour and take place in the University Library.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information, which is collected about you during the course of the research, will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. I will not disclose any information of the content in your social networking sites and identity to anyone.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be reported in my PhD in Education (Soc) thesis and most likely will be published in journal articles. You will not be identified in any shape or form in the reports and publications. A pseudonym will be used instead of your real name. If you are interested on the outcomes of the research, I will be able to provide a summary of my findings following the completion of my degree (October 2017).

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

Researcher: Nuramira Anuar
n.anuar.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Principal Supervisor: Dr Barbara Read
Barbara.Read@glasgow.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

APPENDIX 9- Consent Form

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Constructing Identity Online: An Investigation of Malaysian Students' Use of Computer-mediated Communication (working title)

Name of Researcher: Nuramira Anuar

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I have been informed that I am entitled to a copy of my interview's transcript.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

4. I have been informed that the information collected by this research will be used in preparing a PhD thesis and possibly for further academic publication such as journal articles, conference papers, and books.

5. I have been informed that my data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Glasgow, while the electronic file will be kept on the computer whose password is known only by the researcher. I understand that my data will be destroyed through shredded machine and all electronic files will be deleted after the researcher has completed her PhD study unless a postdoctoral project arises.

6. I confirm that I consent to the researcher viewing my Facebook page, wall posts and interviewing me on my perceptions of Facebook.

7. I understand that I will be referred to by pseudonym or given a code name in any publications arising from the research.

8. I understand that the researcher will not interact with me outside the research process, or will affect my relationship in any way with my contacts on my Facebook page.

9. I have been informed about my right regarding the audio recording procedure. Therefore, (please tick a box)

a. I agree that the interview will be recorded ☐

b. I prefer that the interview will not be recorded ☐

8. I agree/do not agree (delete where applicable) to take part in this research.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Nuramira Anuar

Researcher	Date	Signature

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