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Witayarat, Nasatorn (2020) *A segue in Thai cultural identity: Impressions of international students' doctoral experience in the UK and their re-adaptation upon return to their home country.* PhD thesis.

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A segue in Thai cultural identity: Impressions of international students' doctoral experience in the UK and their re-adaptation upon return to their home country

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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Abstract

With the continuing high number of international PhD students in the UK, more research studies are arguably necessary not only to investigate in-depth their overall doctoral journey but also, to gain a sound appreciation of their experiences of returning to their home country after completing a challenging doctoral study abroad. This original body of work specifically focuses on Thai international PhD students and aims to explore the impact of Thai cultural identity on academic acculturation and the psychosocial adaptation that they experienced while in the UK and subsequently, how such an evolved identity during the PhD period then necessitated a re-adaptation to the Thai context upon their return. In elucidating the complexity involved in the appreciation of Thai students' doctoral sojourn and beyond, a combination of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures, transnationalism and the threshold concept are selected as theoretical frameworks to guide the entire investigation.

The empirical basis for the body of work comprises two independent but intertwined qualitative studies involving 15 Thai international PhD students in the UK and 15 Thai international PhD returnees to Thailand. Photo-elicitation techniques, which involve employing photographs in a research interview, were employed in the two studies to: 1) facilitate in-depth interpretative discussions of abstract and metaphorical concepts; 2) strengthen and enhance the trustworthiness of findings. Whereas Study 1 employed Thematic Analysis in the data analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which aims to produce an account of participants' lived experience, was utilised for Study 2. In Study 1, participants' accounts reflected the powerful impact of Thai cultural identity, e.g. hierarchy and collectivism, which were conveyed through their interactions with their supervisors, their fellow doctoral students – Thai and international students. Interestingly, their entire learning and living experiences in the UK contributed to an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, which consequently posed a challenge to them when they returned to Thailand. Study 1 also highlights the additional layers of challenges unique to Thai students with respect to meeting PhD standards and requirements in the UK. Likewise, it can be argued that such experiences gave them ample opportunities, e.g. exposure to radically different cultures, which led to a better understanding of people from

different cultural backgrounds and offered practical and financial benefits including potential for career advancement. The conclusion drawn from Study 1 suggests that adaptation for Thai PhD students, by default, is an ongoing process as part of Thai PhD students living and studying in the host country due to a number of contrasting differences resulting from both societal and academic cultures. Study 2 demonstrates that the impact of Thai international PhD students abroad, particularly on their identity, has after-effect consequences upon their return to their home country. Taken together, there is evidence to suggest via the findings of studies 1 and 2 that this particular cohort's doctoral experiences of studying in the UK and returning to Thailand were often multi-dimensional and an altogether complex journey.

Overall, this original body of work contributes to knowledge by offering deeper insights into: 1) conceptual models in relation to the impact of Thai cultural identity on their academic acculturation and the psychosocial adaptation as PhD students in the UK and, in turn, the experiences of their re-adaptation upon their return to Thailand; 2) greater understanding particularly of the under-explored research on international PhD students' experiences following return to the home country leading to in-depth insight characterising complementary journeys of Thai international PhD students from their doctoral studies in the UK to their return to Thailand. The research findings arguably indicate that the experiences of Thai international PhD students comprise not only their adaptation when they come to live and study in the UK but also their re-adaptation to the Thai context when they return to Thailand.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSC	The Civil Service Commission (Thailand)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Approach
OCSC	Office of the Civil Service Commission (Thailand)
OEA	Office of Educational Affairs (the Royal Thai Embassy)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDI	Power Distance Index
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RCS	Reverse Culture Shock
TA	Thematic Analysis
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UG	Undergraduate
UK	United Kingdom
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
US	United States

Dedication

To my late father who helped me become who I am today. I am very grateful for your unconditional love.

Acknowledgements

There have been many people who have assisted me in completing this thesis. Without them, my research project would not have reached fruition.

I am grateful for the financial support from Thammasat University and the Faculty of Liberal Arts throughout my study. To my supervisors, Dr Dely Elliot and Dr Kate Reid, I could not be more grateful for their patience, steadfast encouragement and insightful comments in shaping this work. I would not be here today without their unwavering support. This work would not be complete without the help of my voluntary participants and participants in pilot interviews for both studies. My thanks go to Dr Dely Elliot and Dr Kara Makara Fuller for all materials and useful advice in our writing sessions.

I would like to extend my appreciation to other academic, administrative, technical and support staff of the School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Student Support, especially Ms Arlene Connelly, Mr Ken Mallard, Mr Neil Ferguson, Ms Jennifer Porch and Ms Jill Moore. I will not forget the friendship of all those who have been through this pleasant journey, and the laughs we shared together. I would like to offer my thanks to friends in Thailand for their constant encouragement.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my colleagues in Thailand for their boundless support and advice during my study. I would like to extend my thanks to administrative staff of Thammasat University and Education Officers of the Office of Educational Affairs in London for their support. Last but not least, words are inadequate to express my deepest gratitude to my mother and sister for their great patience, help and emotional support to make this dream happen every step of the way.

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.

Signature:

Printed Name: Nasatorn Witayarat

Chapter 1

General Introduction

1.1 Context of the Study

International education has gained in popularity over the last two decades. According to OECD (2013), the number of international students in tertiary education has sharply increased from 1.3 million in 1990 to nearly 4.3 million in 2011. OECD iLibrary (2019) predicts that the number of international students from undergraduate to postgraduate research levels would reach eight million by 2025 worldwide. According to Institute of International Education (2019), the US remain the most popular destination for international students in 2018, with the UK coming second, followed by China, Australia and France. It implies that international students are likely to choose to study in English-speaking countries as three English speaking countries rank among the top five destinations for international students. Further, this reflects the notion that English still remains a global language or the lingua franca of the world (ICEF, 2017).

In the UK, 297,185 full-time international students from outside the EU enrol in British higher education institutions in the academic year 2017-18 at all levels of study (HESA, 2019a). From this number, 29,225 are full-time international PhD students from non-European union countries (HESA, 2019a). Based on HESA (2019a) data for the academic year 2017/18, students from China are the largest group followed by those from Saudi Arabia, the US, Nigeria and India. Concerning the classification of the subject area, engineering and technology are chosen by the most international PhD students from Non-European Union countries while physical sciences rank second, followed by Social studies, Biological sciences and Business and administrative studies (HESA, 2019b). There are a number of reasons why the UK has become one of the leading destinations for international students. It is believed that UK offered high quality of research (Kemp and Lawton, 2013); the UK is recognised by employers and academics worldwide and has more shorter courses than other countries which could help reduce study expenses (UCAS, 2019). It is generally known that international students face many challenges to adapt themselves when they come to study abroad (e.g. Edgeworth and Eiseman,

2007; Townsend and Poh, 2008; Zhang, 2011). At the same time, the experiences of studying abroad tend to lead to personal changes and growth and development (e.g. Cisneros-Donahue, et al., 2012; Liu and Winder, 2014; Tarry, 2011). This possibly explains ongoing attraction among students to experience an international education.

In this body of work, the focus is on Thai international PhD students in the UK. This cohort is important for British higher education as its number is ranked eleventh among the top fifteen international PhD students who come from outside the European Union (see Table 1: Number of international PhD students who come from both the European Union (EU) and non-EU countries and study full-time in the UK in the academic year 2017/18).

Table 1.1 Number of international PhD students

Top fifteen non-EU sending countries	Number of international PhD students
1. China	6,205
2. Saudi Arabia	2,720
3. Italy	2,520
4. United States	2,255
5. Germany	1,945
6. Nigeria	1,845
7. India	1,425
8. Greece	1,265
9. Mexico	770
10. Malaysia	735
11. Thailand	700
12. Turkey	690
13. Canada	580
14. Iran	505
15. Brazil	445

Statistics were adapted from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from

At the same time, the UK has grown in popularity as the first destination for study abroad among Thai international PhD students (see the Civil Service Commission, 2019a). It is reported that the number of Thai international PhD students in the

UK is higher than those in the US from 2015 up until now (see data from the Civil Service Commission, 2019 to the Civil Service Commission, 2015). It is also worth noting that there are 442 Thai international PhD students who win scholarships from private and government-based institutions to study for a PhD in the UK in 2019 while there are 309 Thai international PhD students who win similar types of scholarships to study for a PhD in the US (the Civil Service Commission, 2019). With the continuing number of Thai international students pursuing their doctoral studies in the UK, conducting research to explore issues relevant to Thai international PhD students when they come to study in the UK and return to Thailand after the completion of their studies can bring benefits to both Thai international PhD students and British university agents. For Thai international PhD students, an in-depth understanding of this experience could assist them to be informed about challenges they may face when they study for a PhD in the UK. For British university agents, they could offer more support to lessen challenges. Additionally, the findings of Study 2 could be beneficial to university agents and other agencies/organisations to lend their support to international Thai PhD returnees to re-adapt to Thai culture.

1.2 Overview of Experiences of Studying Abroad

It is reported that international students tend to face personal, academic and social challenges when they study abroad. Concerning personal challenges, it is pointed out that the differences between international students' home culture and host culture could have an impact on their adaptation to Western academic practices (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007). Further, studying in another language is likely to pose a major challenge to international students, particularly for those for whom English is a foreign language, e.g. oral comprehension in classrooms (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007) and essay writing (Zhang and Brunton, 2007). Arguably, language barrier can add an extra layer of complexity to the challenges that international students face during their studies abroad apart from dealing with cultural differences and different academic cultures. With respect to social challenges, the challenges include making friends with local friends (Alghamdi and Otte, 2016; Newsome and Cooper, 2016) and loneliness due to the absence of their friends and families who live in the home countries (Sawir, et al., 2008). Thai

international students have similarities with other international students in terms of academic challenges as it is reported that Thai international postgraduate taught students face the challenge of understanding their lectures in English in their classrooms in the UK (Cleary, 2016). Despite the challenges that international students face when they live and study abroad, Montgomery (2010) states that being exposed to a different culture in a new setting can lead to the evolved sense of cultural identity. It is, thus, interesting to explore whether Thai cultural identity of Thai international PhD students evolves during their studies in the UK and how their experiences of living and studying in the UK contribute to this potential evolution of Thai cultural identity.

In addition to understanding the experiences of adaptation to living and studying abroad such experience also entails the experience of international students returning to their home country after gaining a doctoral degree – a research phenomenon that is less explored but is worth investigating to complete the story underpinning the international doctoral journey.

1.3 Overview of Experiences of Returning to Home countries

Research studies report that the experiences of studying abroad can lead to international returnees' growth and development in terms of independence and maturity (e.g. Brown, 2009b; Gill, 2007; Gu, 2011; Liu and Winder, 2014; Tarry, 2011). However, these personal changes can also pose a challenge to them when they live with their family again due to the loss of privacy and inability to lead their life independently (Rujipak, 2009). Further, as a result of inherent acculturation and evolved cultural identity, this may also lead to unforeseen consequences. For example, international returnees may in some ways find it difficult to re-adapt themselves to their work in their institution or organisations upon their return to their home countries (Wang, 2016). Arguably, these challenges reflect another part of the entire journey – an indication of further challenges with respect to their subsequent re-adaptation to their home country following their educational sojourn.

Against this background, this whole body of work encompasses two studies. Study 1 seeks to explore the role that Thai cultural identity plays in psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD students and to examine whether Thai cultural identity evolves as a result of studying in the UK. Then, Study 2 aims to investigate this cohort's experiences upon their return to Thailand, particularly, what their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity actually means and what its implications are. Study 2 specifically investigates the challenges of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions as well as how the use of their knowledge and experiences during their studies in the UK can be beneficial for their career as well as their relationships with other Thai people.

1.4 Aims and Research Questions

In these two intertwined studies, Study 1 aims to investigate the impact of Thai cultural identity on psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD students. From these aims, the following research questions have been constructed to achieve the objectives set for this study:

1. How do Thai international PhD students perceive their cultural identity as they live and study in the UK?

(1.1) How does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity affect their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation?

(1.2) Does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity evolve as a result of living and studying abroad? If so, how? What are the contributory factors to this?

Study 2 sets out to examine the effects of evolved sense of Thai cultural identity on the challenges of Thai international PhD returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions, personal changes, career advancement and their social relationships upon their return to Thailand. The research questions included:

1. How do Thai international PhD returnees perceive their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, their academic development and personal changes?

(1.1) What are the challenges that Thai international PhD returnees face when they repatriate in terms of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions?

(1.2) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience gained from their PhD studies in the UK when interacting with other people?

(1.3) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience acquired during their PhD studies in the UK for their career advancement?

1.5 Significance of the whole body of work

The whole body of work focuses on the role of Thai cultural identity in psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD students in the UK and the experiences of their re-adaptation upon their return to Thailand after gaining a doctoral degree from the UK. Attention is paid to Thai cultural identity because there remains a dearth of conceptual exploration and empirical evidence on the ways in which Thai cultural identity may influence and continue to shape Thai international PhD students' identities, values and behaviour.

From the EBSCOHOST, a huge multi-database search for peer reviewed and empirical studies, there are three studies in relation to Thai international postgraduate taught and PhD students; this, however, does not count PhD theses. The focus of the three studies includes the relationships of Thai international PhD students and their supervisors in Australia (Nomnian, 2017a), the construction of academic identity of a Thai international PhD student (Nomnian, 2017b) and the experiences of Thai international undergraduate and postgraduate taught

students after the completion of their studies in the UK (Tarry, 2011). Arguably, Thai international students may differ from other Asian students due to the impact of Thai cultural values combined with Theravada Buddhism on their behaviour. As a specific example, the *Krengjai* attitude or showing respect to a person with social superiority (Klausner, 2000) or teachers in this particular context can result in Thai students' feelings of being afraid of questioning the knowledge of their teachers. Another example is the religious belief that individuals should accumulate their good Karma by respecting what teachers say and not challenge or question their teachers (Nguyen, 2005) which could reflect ingratitude and inappropriate behaviour towards teachers. Consequently, a combination of distinct beliefs, behaviours, and cultural dispositions may have an impact on their international PhD experience, e.g. equal interaction between PhD students and supervisors and critical thinking, which is unlikely to conform to Thai cultural identity and Thai academic practices. Critical thinking refers to "the process of analysing information in order to reach a logical decision about the extent to which you believe something to be true or false" (Oxford University Press, 2014, p.188). From this definition, it implies that people should not believe what someone says or everything they read, but they should question other people's ideas or information they receive. In the learning context, this definition suggests that students should not merely accept what their teachers tell them or what the books or papers say. In fact, they should learn to question the ideas of others, even questioning what their teachers say. Interestingly, the Kalama Sutta, known as the Buddha's teachings, emphasises the importance of not believing everything that teachers say, but individuals should think carefully before believing anything and decide what to believe by themselves. As most Thais are Buddhist, this Buddhist doctrine tends to be taught in Thai schools to encourage Thai students to judge things by themselves or question what their teachers say – a similar way of promoting their critical thinking. However, it is worth considering that Thai society is likely to subscribe to hierarchy, especially in terms of relationships, and this can have a major impact on how people behave towards each other, i.e. students show respect to their teachers by not questioning or challenging what the teachers say. Therefore, even though Thais may be taught about the Kalama Sutta, the focus on hierarchy tends to prevail in Thai society. Therefore, developing critical thinking is a challenge among Thai students as questioning Thai

teachers in classrooms can be interpreted as challenging teachers' authority or disrespecting teachers (Prommak,2019). Thus, Thai students tend to have a rare opportunity to practise this learning skill in their classrooms in Thailand and lack of this skill tends to pose a challenge to them when they study abroad. For example, the results of qualitative interviews conducted by Nomnian (2017a) indicate that Thai international PhD students find it challenging to express their ideas logically and critically during their meeting with their supervisors in Australia. Further, the focus on the doctoral level can help examine whether the cultural identity of Thai international PhD students evolves as a result of their exposure to a different culture for a number of years. The findings of Study 1 are arguably beneficial in assisting Thai international PhD students to prepare for their studies even before their departure for the UK. Moreover, an in-depth understanding of this experience could make British university agents aware of the challenges this cohort face which would be useful when offering support to mitigate these challenges.

Study 2 is the continuation of a journey when Thai international PhD students return to Thailand after completing their doctoral studies from the UK. If there is limited research for Study 1 in terms of focus on Thai students' doctoral education context, there is an even greater dearth of research concerning international Thai students returning to their home countries, particularly international PhD students. Study 2 intends to examine re-adaptation of Thai students to their home country and their institutions as well as exploration of potential benefits of UK educational experiences to international PhD returnees' career advancement. Likewise, the findings of Study 2 could potentially be beneficial to university agents and other agencies/organisations to consider what more could be done to support this cohort when they return to Thailand in terms of assisting them to re-adapt themselves to Thai culture. Consequently, they can function more effectively in their professional and personal lives over time. Study 2 also raises awareness of the hidden challenges awaiting Thai international PhD students when they return to Thailand, beyond the long-term gains from opportunities to study abroad, e.g. subject knowledge developed during their studies in the UK and a better understanding of people from different cultural backgrounds.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

In the light of this structure, the thesis consists of six chapters.

The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the context of the whole body of work, the overview of experiences of studying abroad and returning to home countries, the rationale of the study, the research objectives and research questions and significance of the whole body of work.

The second chapter is the literature review. It considers the theoretical backbone of the research agenda by reviewing the literature related to experiences of international students including factors in their decisions to study abroad, challenges in terms of different academic practices as well as social and emotional aspects. This chapter also reviews the literature related to doctoral education experience and threshold concept, which is one of the theoretical frameworks of this research. The re-adaptation of international students to their home countries is also discussed to present the challenges of returning to home countries and the benefits that studying abroad provide.

In Chapter Three, Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures and transnationalism as theoretical frameworks employed in the whole body of work are discussed, including the criticism and support of these frameworks and their employment in the contexts of international students.

Chapter Four is an empirical chapter of Study 1 focusing on the role of Thai cultural identity and its impact in psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD Students in the UK. It discusses challenges faced by Thai international students during their studies abroad, cultural identity, the method section, the results, discussion and the conclusion.

Chapter Five is an empirical chapter of Study 2 highlighting experiences of re-adaptation of Thai international PhD returnees who received a doctoral degree from the UK in the last five years. It discusses the benefits acquired from studying abroad, re-entry challenges of international returnees and theoretical

frameworks, i.e. Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures, transnationalism and the threshold concept. This chapter also outlines how the study was carried out, showing the way data were collected and analysed, the results, discussion and the conclusions.

Chapter Six combines key findings of Study 1 and Study 2 and demonstrates their connection to the theoretical frameworks employed in this original body of work. This chapter also discusses conceptual contributions, practical implications, research limitations, recommendations for further research and ends with the researcher's reflection on her own journey as a Thai international PhD student in the UK.

Chapter 2

Common and Distinct Experiences of International Students and Their Return to Home Country

2.1 Introduction

'International students' often refers to students who have crossed country borders for the specific purpose of study and who are now enrolled at an educational institution outside their home country (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018). They can also be viewed as 'student sojourners' who stay temporarily in a new place from one semester up to many years to obtain an overseas degree or international academic credentials (Moores and Popadiuk, 2011). Thus, international students are neither citizens nor permanent residents living and studying in a particular country (Tran, 2011). In this whole body of work, the term 'international students' is employed and recognises the diversity of students coming from different countries. International students are also classified by the fee status at the learned institution (UKCISA, 2018a; see Queen Mary University of London, 2017 for the example of tuition fees). Currently, there are reported to be 450,660 international students in the UK from countries in either the European Union (EU) or non-EU countries (UKCISA, 2018b). It is suggested that international students provide benefits to British industry (Universities UK, 2017). It is estimated that international students of all levels in the academic year 2014-15 generate £750 million to the UK transport industry, £690 million to the retail industry and tax revenues of £1 billion, which is reported to be equivalent to the salaries of 31,700 nurses or 25,000 police officers (Universities UK, 2017). Further, international students bring diversity to campus, which can enable home students to broaden their cultural awareness, develop and gain exposure to different cultural competencies and enhance their social networks when they meet people from different cultural backgrounds (Mason and Eva, 2014). For international students, their experiences of living and studying abroad may contribute to their personal development, academic growth and opportunities to learn new skills that may not be available or equivalently experienced in their home country (Moores and Popadiuk, 2011).

This chapter starts by discussing the experiences of international students in a foreign country in relation to the academic - social- and psychologically-related issues. This type of research is exemplied in studies by Acker and Haque, 2015; Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007; Morita, 2004; Sawir, et al., 2008; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Townsend and Poh, 2008; and others. These are discussed more fully in this review. The focus of the research contained in this thesis is concerned with the impact of Thai cultural identity on psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai International PhD Students in the UK. Issues relevant to doctoral education are also presented. This research complements existing research and adds to the evolving knowledge base.

Before looking at details of the experiences of international students, it is useful to consider factors influencing international students' decisions to study abroad, and this will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Factors Influencing International Students' Decisions to Study Abroad

Factors that encourage international students to study overseas can be categorised according to a range of "push and pull factors" (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, p.82). Push factors refer to a student's decision to study abroad while pull factors depend on a host country that is attractive to international students. To investigate these factors, Mazzarol and Soutar conduct a large-scale mixed methods study and the findings demonstrate the connection between participants decisions to study in Australia and push-pull factors. According to this study, the belief that overseas courses are likely to be better than the local ones are of primary importance in terms of push factors while knowledge of the destination country appears to be the most important pull factor influencing participants' decisions. Interestingly, Mazzarol and Soutar do not mention the role of education agents in terms of influencing international students' decision on their overseas education - an issue that is subsequently explored in Thai context of research conducted by Pimpa (2003). Pimpa strongly argues that education 'agents' play a more important role in helping students select the country destination and academic courses than either family's and/or friend's suggestions. An agent is defined as "a person or company that represents another person or company, especially in business"

(Pearson, 2014, p.35). This is because agents often provide in-depth information and even employ marketing tactics, e.g. free airfares and the agent's role as a middleman between students and a university representative (Pimpa, 2003), including provision of other services, e.g. visa applications, accommodation and other relevant official procedures (Pimpa, 2002). Arguably, this is an indication that Thai international students' decisions to study abroad are likely to be complex, as they involve numerous factors and different networks of personal and professional contacts which operate to influence the decision making.

2.3 Issues Affecting International Students When They Study and Live in Western Countries

There are two key terms pertaining to the experiences of international students, i.e. adjustment and adaptation, which have been employed in numerous studies (e.g. Gill, 2007; Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007; Shafaei, Nejati and Razak, 2018; Zhou, et al., 2008) and they are used interchangeably (see Andrade, 2006). According to Kim (2002), adjustment is defined as a psychological reaction to challenges individuals face when experiencing new and often unfamiliar situations. Adapting to a new country and culture is a clear example of a new and unfamiliar situation. Adaptation means the process by which individuals who move to another country attempt to establish and maintain a relationship with an unfamiliar environment with the aim of finding compatibility in that environment (Kim, 2002). Thus, adaptation may involve a combination of social and cultural facets or sociocultural factors. As such, adaptation echoes the idea that individuals strive to cope with a difficult situation (Kim, 2006). Whereas adaptation highlights the process of sociocultural adaptation of international students studying and living abroad (Townsend and Poh, 2008), adjustment tends to focus on the psychological aspect. For example, adjustment is used as a suggestion for universities to implement measures facilitating the adjustment of international students to overcome their loneliness and social isolation (see Sawir, et al., 2008). Adaptation, on the other hand, has been used in contexts in which international students adapt themselves to 'fit' into new academic environments when they study abroad (Gill, 2007; Tran, 2011). Interestingly, Bennett (2004) points out that adaptation can be employed in a situation when individuals can maintain their primary cultural identity, but fit in effectively in a different cultural setting. Thus,

in this study, the term adaptation is selected since it connects to both sociocultural and academic factors, which may be appropriate to the context of explaining the experiences of Thai international PhD students, living and studying abroad. Further, the term adaptation is appropriate to the context of this study as it may not be necessary for Thai international students to change their Thai cultural identity to operate effectively in the UK.

Existing research exploring the experiences of international students abroad have identified three main useful areas, which enable research focus. These are academic, social and emotional aspects (e.g. Ammigan and Jones, 2018; Liu and Winder, 2014; Misra, Crist and Burant, 2003; Rajapaksa and Dundes, 2002; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). For instance, exposure to novel academic norms, e.g. showing analytical and logical skills of writing, that do not align with international students' prior educational experiences may cause international students to experience emotional consequences such as anxiety and stress (Andrade, 2006). Likewise, difficulties with developing relationships with local students may result in social consequences such as loneliness and/or isolation among international students (Robertson, et al., 2000). Therefore, these areas will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2.3.1 Different Academic Practices

There is a strong evidence base that reports consistently that international students face a range of personal and professional challenges when adapting themselves to new academic conventions. This could be due to different cultural approaches to teaching and learning (Gill, 2007) between the home and the host countries. Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li (2013) state that the Western/ European concept of learning values independence of thought, critical thinking, debate and adopting a challenging attitude which is characterised as "a mind orientation in learning" (p. 208). This contrasts with the aim of learning in East Asian or the Confucian culture of mainland China which emphasises both the acquisition of knowledge and morality, e.g. diligence, perseverance and concentration, and this is conceptualised as "virtue oriented" (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013, p. 210). Consequently, Western learners are likely to attach importance and feel confident to questioning the ideas of their teachers or expressing doubts, thus emphasising

the cultural idea of individualism in the domain of cognition (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). While it is recognised that Asian students do not conform to one type of person, the research indicates that, broadly speaking, this may be in contrast to Asian students' methods of learning. This is because they are likely to attach importance to memorisation learning strategies (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). Correspondingly, learning is also regarded as an internal process which requires silence. This contrasts with Western academic culture which emphasises talk and communication as a means of learning (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). Taken together, international students, a heterogenous group in terms of home country, may also be unaccustomed to the host country's different approach to pedagogy of verbal participation in their new country of study (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007; Townsend and Poh, 2008). From my experience of talking with other fellow PhD students, international PhD students from Asia tend not to participate verbally in a research course class. This may firstly be due to a large class size, which may make them lose their confidence or being unaccustomed to verbal participation in a large class. Thus, observed silence of international students in their classrooms abroad may depend on several factors, including students' perception of having less knowledge than their classmates, lack of English language proficiency, limited knowledge of course content (Morita, 2004), or possibly a combination of all these. It could then be argued that the challenges of verbal participation confronting international students in their classrooms abroad may be caused by many factors, not necessarily affected only by cultural contexts. Reluctance to participate in verbal debate and dialogue also extends to conventions of academic writing. Some of these conventions are culturally sensitive. In research conducted by Zhang (2011), the results of qualitative interviews demonstrate that previous educational experience in China has an impact on academic writing of Chinese postgraduate students in a university in Canada. In China, independent criticisms and debates are not encouraged in the essay-writing practices of Chinese students. This is largely connected to the promotion of the practice, which encourages acceptance of printed/published material as indisputable fact (Zhang, 2011). Thus, this may suggest that academic practices in the home culture can have a huge impact on international students' writing (Tran, 2013). Consequently, writing English essays can pose a challenge to some international students abroad if they are not given sufficient pre-entry

academic support to learn how to develop academic standards and conventions appropriate to the host country.

Additionally, the lack of language fluency may pose a challenge to international students when they write academic papers. In a study conducted by Zhang and Brunton (2007) who administer a questionnaire with Chinese international students who enrol in polytechnics, universities and language schools in New Zealand, findings demonstrate that participants spend more time writing academic papers due to the lack of language fluency. This shows how language barriers may pose a challenge to international students to communicate with local students. In a study conducted by Townsend and Poh (2008), the results of qualitative interviews indicate that participants from Asia have difficulties with socialising with local students in a university in Australia. This is due to the lack of proficiency in English, unfamiliarity with accent and slang or fast rate of speech by locals (Townsend and Poh, 2008). Language barrier also includes the challenge of understanding rural accents and colloquialism of Western lecturers (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007). Arguably, the challenge of academic writing in English including English grammar and meanings may pose more challenges to international students than the struggle with fathoming local accent and colloquialisms. This may be because the longer they live and study in a particular area the more they may decode the accent due to familiarity with the accent. Academic writing in English may be more complicated than deciphering the local accent as there may be numerous issues to deal with. Further, international students may require more time to master academic writing skills, e.g. avoiding plagiarism, rearranging the phrases in a sentence and modifying the word form, not including the requirements of developing coherence within a paragraph. Notwithstanding these academic challenges, I contend that studying abroad gives international students exposure to new academic conventions and offers them an opportunity to learn to adapt themselves to conform to Western academic practices, e.g. verbal participation in seminars and improvement in their reading comprehension.

2.3.2 Social and Emotional Aspects

After the 1950s, negative experiences associated with social and psychological aspects have received some research attention in the context of international

students (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001). Early empirical research is largely based on reporting the psychological challenges and emotional risk factors associated with transition experiences (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001). In some cases, these negative experiences are attributed to personal weakness or lack of resilience to cope (Bochner, 1986). There is also a prevailing perception that these negative experiences are in some way indicative of a need for external, psychological support, such as referral to University counsellor (Bochner, 1986). By the 1980s, the experiences of international students overseas are beginning to be viewed more holistically where both the learning environment, social and psychological experiences are more likely to be viewed as inter-dependent (Bochner, 1982). The exposure to other cultures lays the basis for the development of the culture learning model (see Zhou, et al., 2008). Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) establish the ABC model to explain a situation in which individuals live in unfamiliar cultural settings (see Figure 2).
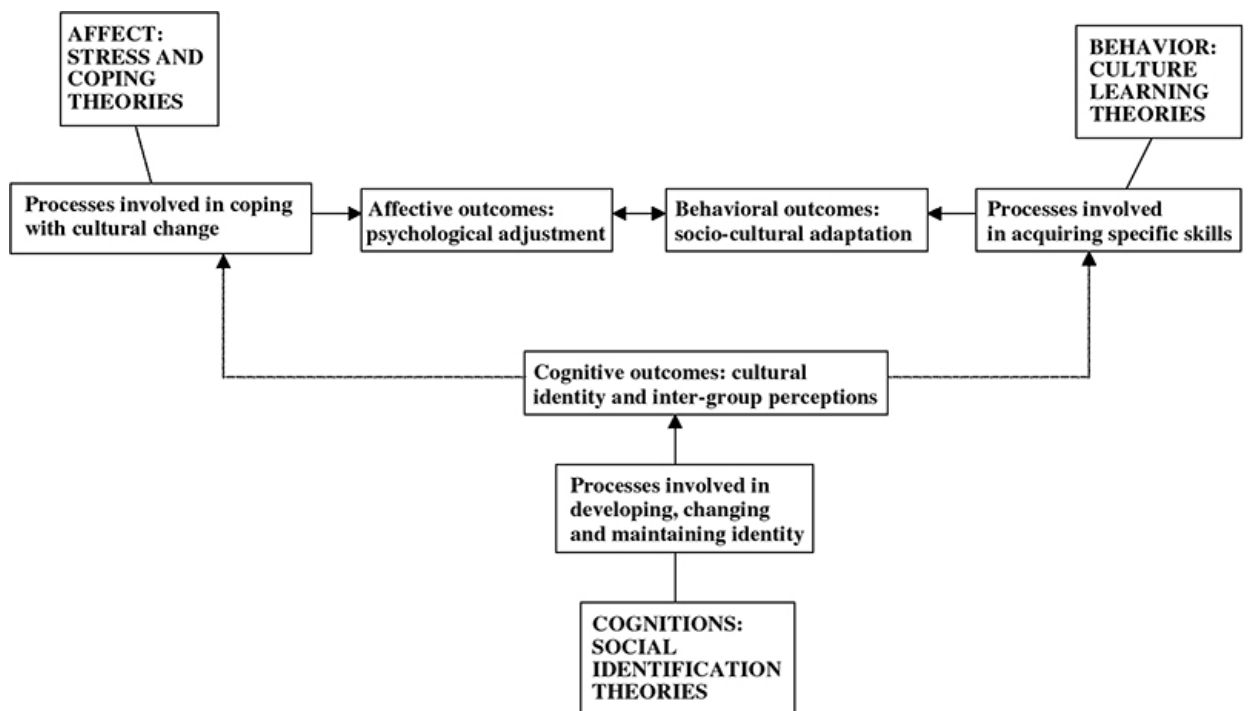
Figure 2.1 The ABC Model of Culture Contact (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001, p.271)

The ABC model is developed from the notion of culture shock (Bochner, 2003; Zhou, et al., 2008) which is defined as an uncomfortable feeling of experiencing an unfamiliar way of life when people are exposed to a new culture (Oberg, 1960).

However, the ABC model does not regard the exposure to another culture as a passive reaction, but as a process of resolving problems occurring from change (Bochner, 2003). This can imply the ability to adapt to a foreign country of individuals (Bochner, 2003). The ABC model focuses on three different components, i.e. affective, behavioural and cognitive components, which Zhou, et al. (2008) argue lay the foundations for a model of cultural adaptation which is employed in extensive literature to investigate psychological well-being and sociocultural adaptation of international students. The first component, affective component, is concerned with individuals' emotional response to stress that can occur during their transition to a new cultural setting (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). It is often called "psychological well-being" (p.71) and covers both positive and negative emotions, e.g. loneliness, homesickness, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life in a foreign country (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Behavioural component is about knowing rules, conventions of interpersonal interaction that vary across cultures (Zhou, et al., 2008). This component embodies verbal and non-verbal communication, e.g. expressing attitudes, gestures and greetings, which vary between cultures (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). This implies that individuals who lack social skills and cultural knowledge of the host culture may be at heightened risk of difficulties in communicating and maintaining relations with people in the host country (Bochner, 2003). Interestingly, this can be demonstrated in the case of different gift-giving interaction which is experienced by Chinese international undergraduate and graduate students in the US (Wu, Garza, and Guzman, 2015), in which interview participants feel uneasy when they are asked to open a gift immediately by their American friends at a Christmas party. This is because opening a gift in front of the American giver is likely to show appreciation (Wu, Garza, and Guzman, 2015). However, people in Chinese culture tend to put the gift aside unopened as Chinese people may believe that opening the gift immediately in front of the giver may show that the person attaches more importance to the value of the gift than the person who gives the gift (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993). The cognitive component of the ABC model focuses on the way individuals perceive and think about themselves and others (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Bochner, 2003). In other words, the cognitive component focuses on the way that individuals identify themselves and others, and this is relevant to the theory of Social Identification (Turner, 2010) that is linked with

two major conceptual approaches, i.e. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) and framework of acculturation (Berry, 1997). The ABC model can be used to explain holistically informed ways to support the transitions of students studying abroad (McGarvey, Murphy and Byrne, 2016). Social Identity Theory is concerned with the impact of group memberships on individual identity and it focuses on two aspects (Tajfel, 1978). The first one is social categorisation, which is referred to as the classification of a person into classes or categories, which make them different from other categories (Tajfel, 1972 cited in Turner, 2010). To illustrate, findings from a qualitative study conducted by Acker and Haque (2015) raise the stereotype that female Asian PhD students tend to be quiet in class. The second aspect is social comparison, which leads to a tendency to favour a person's own group or "in-group favouritism" (p.99). This notion may be implicitly aligned with a study conducted by Brown (2009a) which explores the adjustment experience of international postgraduate taught students at a university in the UK. The majority of participants are from South East Asia. The results from participant observation and in-depth interviews indicate that participants are likely to form friendships and wider social networks with their co-nationals rather than with British friends or other international friends. The results of observation demonstrate that participants are likely to have interaction with their co-national friends in class and in common areas such as the canteen and coffee bar. The results of qualitative interviews demonstrate that participants visit other friends' houses, cook food and eat together. This co-national interaction occurs because participants state that speaking their own native language can reduce their stress of communicating in a foreign language, and they share a similar cultural heritage, i.e. similar nationality. Further, dependence on the co-national group is reported, through the semi-structured interviews, as enabling participants to solve practical personal and professional problems and challenges such as offering local advice on where to buy food suited to their taste and preferred methods of preparations (Brown, 2009a). Arguably, this attachment to the co-national group reflects the needs and support of international students. However, despite the emotional support gained, confining oneself to the co-national group may hinder the improvement of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the host country. Further, in-group favouritism may cause the perception of the preference for the in-group to the out-group; the out-group in this case would be interactions with 'home' students and or other

international students from different countries. In more extreme cases, identification and preference to maintain this 'in-group' status may lead to implicit discrimination where potential cultural and social barriers are not crossed leading to a risk of conflict or rejection of other cultural groups. While this consequence is less likely to occur, it is important to recognise because it may lead to racism. In Patron's (2007) study, French participants report that they are verbally abused during their studies in Australian universities and attribute this to speaking French among themselves, finding that they are at times told by locals to go 'back home'. Thus, with a view to reducing potential prejudice and discrimination faced by international students during their interaction with host nationals, there is a notion that the increased contact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds may ameliorate inter-group tolerance and relations (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). This notion is supported by Allport's Contact Theory (1954), which is employed in research on experiences of international students' interaction with home students and getting support from administrators and the teaching staff when they study in the UK. Contact theory posits that the interaction with people from different cultures may lead to mutual understanding and tolerance (Allport, 1954). This can happen when four conditions are met. These four conditions include equal status between majority and minority groups of people in a society, e.g. occupational distributions between blacks and whites in terms of high-paying jobs; common goals, e.g. working together to win in sports competition of a multi-ethnic athletic team regardless of their different ethnic composition of the team. The last two conditions embody intergroup cooperation, e.g. placing Black soldiers in the company of White soldiers during a combat where they live or die together based on the result of their joint effort and the support of authorities; law or custom, e.g. Fair Employment Practices Commissions (FEPC) to prohibit discrimination in business and industry in the US (Allport, 1954). Although Allport's theory is developed in the study, which aims to reduce prejudice, the four conditions are important to develop empathy and mutual understanding of other people from different cultural backgrounds (Schweisfurth and Gu (2009). In the context of international students, the conditions are equal status between international students and local students; a shared purpose that groups of students are working towards; a cooperative relation of the groups; and support from institutional authorities, i.e. administrators and lecturers at a university. Using Contact Theory, Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) have investigated

how much the university setting promotes international students' interactions with those from different cultures via questionnaires, interviews and a focus group method. According to the conditions of contact, the findings demonstrate that the majority of international students feel that there is inequality in the tuition fees as international undergraduate students pay twice as much as the home or EU students do. Consequently, participants are unable to take part in social activities in order to save money or many of them are obliged to take paid work to ameliorate their financial situations. Arguably, financial constraints of international students may at times lead to depression or poor living conditions. Further, participants see themselves as being in competition to get higher grades with home students and participants think that home students prioritise socialising, drinking alcohol and clubbing, rather than giving priority to achieving well academically (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). This finding concurs with a study conducted by Findlay (2017) with Chinese undergraduate students in the UK. Findlay's focus group evidence suggests that many of the Chinese participants do not enjoy night clubbing and drinking alcohol when they study in the UK, but they prefer going to their friends' flat, chatting and cooking together (Findlay, 2017). Arguably, the reason for not having this type of socialising habit depends on many factors, e.g. care responsibilities and religion of international students. To illustrate, if they have family commitments or practise a religion that forbids consumption of alcohol, they are unlikely to go out to clubs and pubs. The findings also indicate that participants express their positive opinions on university support, e.g. the induction week, language support for non-native speakers and welcome activities for international students, which facilitate their transition to a new mode of studying and living in the UK (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). When living in a foreign country, individuals are encouraged to conceptualise home and host identities (Berry, 1997). They may even temporarily discard their cultural heritage or home culture (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik, 2010) or may maintain both cultures (Bochner, 1982).

This change that occurs is relevant to the concept of acculturation, which is conceptualised as strategies that individuals employ when participating in a culturally diverse society (Berry, 1997). Consequently, acculturation can lead to "the process of change in a person as a result of extended contact with another cultural group" (Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 8). According to Smith and

Khawaja (2011), acculturation is employed in research with international students who may encounter life changes when they live in a new setting. Arguably, acculturation can be regarded as a two-way process as it is not only individuals who will discard their home culture or maintain both cultures but also individuals in the host culture who are able to influence others around them. Further, life changes may cause stress or stressors if international students appraise life changes as a difficulty. The life change can pose a challenge to international students when they form friendships abroad, which can thus contribute to the feelings of loneliness, and this incident can be regarded as a sociocultural stressor (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Research by Sawir, et al. (2008) indicate that a possible cause of loneliness may be attributed to cultural differences of international students, particularly those who are coming from collectivist societies.

According to Hofstede (1991), collectivistic societies refer to societies in which people count on their in-groups to look after them and give their loyalty in return. Thus, people in collectivistic societies may attach importance to personal relationships (Hofstede, 1991). This contrasts with individualistic societies in which people take care of themselves and their own family. Thus, people in individualistic societies are likely to display autonomy and independence (Triandis, 2001), and may express their opinions frankly (Hofstede, 1991) and their needs assertively (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012). A qualitative study in Australian context carried out by Sawir, et al. (2008) indicate that international student participants from collectivist societies such as Malaysia, Singapore and Zimbabwe, are likely to experience cultural loneliness due to unfamiliar culture in Australia which may be regarded as an individualistic society. Arguably, individuals' personality traits may be a contributing factor to feelings of loneliness, e.g. low self-confidence or introversion, as this may diminish the desire to socialise with others (Pijpers, 2017).

This section demonstrates that international students face challenges when they live and study abroad. These challenges include different academic cultures between the host country and international students' home countries. International students also encounter lack of language proficiency, which poses a challenge to them when they write academic papers and socialise with local

students. Additionally, this section points out the importance of the support of co-nationals to facilitate the lives of international students abroad. Finally, the issue of feelings of loneliness faced by international students is reported. Arguably, though facing challenges while living and studying abroad, this experience can lead to international students' growth and human development when they are exposed to different educational environments and meet other people from different cultural backgrounds. The following section will discuss research on reflection on doctoral education experience including details of doctoral programme and challenges of completing a PhD in a foreign country.

2.4 Reflection on Doctoral Education Experience

The UK receives one of the highest rates of International PhD students in the world (see OECD, 2016). In the academic year 2016-17, there are 100,085 EU and non-EU international PhD students registered at British universities, compared with 95,805 PhD students in the academic year 2012-13 (HESA, 2018). This rising entry of international students places the proposed research at an important time for HE study in the UK, both in terms of funding landscape as well as inter-university challenges to offer these students superior learning and personal development experiences. Many international PhD students (e.g. 800 international PhD students on a scholarship by the Cambridge Trust collaborating with approximately 90 partners across the world (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018) enter a doctoral programme of study through sponsored scholarships. Often these sponsorships are located back in the home country through the learnt institution that the individual belongs to (see the acknowledgements in the PhD thesis of Khan (2017); the acknowledgements in the PhD thesis of Naruemon (2013). In many cases, the individual holds an academic position (Robinson-Pant, 2009) and decides to study for a PhD abroad to gain more advanced knowledge and skills of conducting research that may not necessarily be available in their home countries (Choi, Nieminen and Townson, 2012). In a mixed-method study undertaken by (Chien, 2013), the findings suggest that one of the decisions why PhD international participants decide to study for a PhD in the UK is due to geographical proximity to PhD students' home countries in the Middle East and Europe. However, the participants in Chien's study include international postgraduate taught students. There are seldom any studies conducted specifically with international PhD

students to explore their decisions to study for a PhD in the UK. From my observation and casual discussion with other international PhD students, shorter length of a PhD programme ranging from three to four years in the UK compared to five years in the US may be one of the main reasons for pursuing a PhD in the UK. Arguably, it is likely that studying for a PhD in the UK may save sponsors' budgets for PhD scholarships which then means that international PhD students's sponsors may prefer to grant a scholarship to those who apply for the programme in the UK rather than elsewhere.

2.4.1 Characteristics of a PhD Programme

Doctoral programmes are the highest research degree awarded (Park, 2005), and require an independent learning approach often without prescribed formal curricula (Walsh, 2010). Normally, PhD students may be supervised by one or two supervisor(s) to receive guidance and support (Wright, 2003). For example, both students and their supervisors may choose training, workshops and seminars that may be appropriate for students (The University of Edinburgh, 2018). In the UK, PhD programmes tend to take about three to four years for full-time programmes and six to eight years for part-time programmes (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2011). The length of doctoral education alone suggests that it requires passion, commitment, self-determination and perseverance to study for a PhD (Geraniou, 2010) as this programme takes many years to complete with a focus on a single project (Brydon and Fleming, 2011). To get a PhD qualification, students are expected to produce an original body of research that offers a significant contribution to the evidence base. The PhD also aims to demonstrate coherent arguments that embody a research insight (Thomson, 2015). Arguably, it is likely that both home and international PhD students face these challenges by default (see Brydon and Fleming, 2011). However, there may be specific issues that predominantly affect the international PhD students, e.g. studying in a second or a foreign language and differing academic traditions in terms of demonstrating critical thinking in writing (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016). Chou (2011) points out that international PhD students coming from a learning culture where critical thinking is not seen as the primary goal of learning and teaching may face real difficulties in writing their academic papers or theses. This section presents various considerations for undertaking a PhD thesis. Before getting a PhD,

international students are likely to have undergone different academic literacy practices in addition to potential language-related challenges when they start a PhD. Thus, the following section will highlight some of these issues.

2.4.2 Lack of Language Proficiency and Different Academic Literacy Practices

It has been stated that international PhD students may face linguistic challenges when they write their theses in another language. In a qualitative interview study undertaken by Elliot, Baumfield and Reid (2016) with non-British postdoctoral academics, the academic-related challenges that participants face when studying for a PhD are highlighted. For example, a participant shares how his supervisor has to spend time correcting his English grammar and his spelling. In the study, participants are given a disposable camera to take a photo reflecting their experiences of studying abroad and choose their photographs as stimuli for the interviews. Several participants take a photograph of their theses to show that they encounter difficulties in writing a thesis in another language. Moreover, writing a PhD thesis causes difficulties for international students' mother tongue.

They make special effort to adapt their writing style in order to conform to the academic writing conventions, e.g. avoiding a descriptive style of writing and exercising care not to be accused of plagiarism (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016). In Odena and Burgess' (2017) qualitative study, the results of semi-structured interviews with both home and international PhD students and recent graduates suggest that some international PhD participants face extra challenges to write their theses critically. These study results imply that the challenges faced by home and international participants during a PhD may be different. Also, the challenges of home PhD students and graduates are likely to be concerned with time management to write their theses due to teaching loads and family commitments (Odena and Burgess, 2017). This warrants further research to compare the differing challenges faced by home and international PhD students so that university agents and supervisors can provide support for these cohorts differently based on the challenges they face during their doctoral studies.

This section illustrates the academic challenges faced by international PhD students when they embark on their doctoral studies abroad. Additionally, there

has been increased attention paid to psychological well-being of international PhD students (Metcalfe, Wilson and Levecque, 2018). It is reported that international PhD students are likely to develop mental health difficulties. This is because of their inability to adjust to a new culture, and losing their rights to live in the UK on their Tier 4 visas in the case of maternity and paternity leave of more than 60 days (Metcalfe, Wilson and Levecque, 2018). Additionally, a substantial body of literature demonstrates that, above all other factors, loneliness comes out as one of the challenges among international PhD students during their studies in a foreign country (e.g. Ali and Kohun, 2006; Walsh, 2010). Therefore, the following section will discuss the causes of the loneliness and how it affects international PhD students.

2.4.3 Social and Learning Isolation and Loneliness

It has been acknowledged that coping with loneliness has become one of the major challenges among PhD students during their studies abroad (e.g. Brown and Holloway, 2008; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Without the requirement to attend classes and working on their own project for several years, doctoral students may have minimal interactions with other students in comparison to those following more formalised programmes of study such as MSc study (Janta, Lugosi and Brown, 2014). Recently, there has been much attention on comparing the experience of loneliness of doctoral students in different disciplines. It is reported by Deem and Brehony (2000) that doctoral students from the social sciences, humanities and arts departments seem to be at a higher risk of loneliness than doctoral students from the natural sciences and technology. One possible reason is that students in the sciences have more interaction with others within their research teams through lab-based learning environments working as part of a wider team, often on a larger project with other PhD students and researchers (Deem and Brehony, 2000). Postdoctoral researchers often have a responsibility for helping PhD students on a day-to-day basis, while supervisors are responsible for giving guidance on the framework and shaping the direction of research (Delamont, Atkinson and Odette, 2004). This contrasts with the research context of PhD students in social sciences where their research projects can differ from the projects of their supervisors (Chiang, 2003). Arguably, factors in generating loneliness in terms of different academic disciplines must be explored within the

context of the PhD researchers own social networks (or lack thereof). Additionally, loneliness may stem from their feeling of the absence of their loved ones who live in their home country in the case of international PhD students and lack of social connections with other PhD students (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016). In addition to the issues of social and learning isolation and loneliness, there are other challenges, i.e. financial constraints, stress, a strict timeframe to complete their doctoral studies and cultural differences in dealing with supervisors. Thus, the following section will discuss these issues.

2.4.4 Other Challenges of Studying for a PhD

It is reported that international PhD students may face financial constraints when they study abroad. In a qualitative study by Acker and Haque (2015), interview findings indicate that both home and international PhD students in Canada experience inadequate funding when they study for a PhD. Consequently, some struggle financially and have to find part-time jobs related or unrelated to their studies. This may highlight the importance of the access to funding and the lack of sufficient funds may have deleterious effects on their studies and emotional well-being (Acker and Haque, 2015). Phillips and Pugh (2015) point out that PhD students who work away from a university are cut off from being in a research environment which may motivate PhD students to complete their works. In addition to financial constraints, stress may be an issue during the PhD period. This is supported by the results of mixed-method study conducted by Barry, et al. (2018) which indicate that the majority of participants experience stress and it has adverse effects on their doctoral studies. Most commonly, participants report that stress causes them to lose motivation, procrastinate and become easily distracted. Consequently, this psychological distress may impede or delay their progress (Barry, et al., 2018). However, the authors do not elaborate on the causes of stress and do not ask participants the most stressful situation they face during their PhD. Lee (2017) adds that international PhD students are likely to be under stress due to a strict timeframe to complete a PhD. This is because most of them are expected to complete their studies by the expiration date of their student visa (Lee, 2017). Arguably, though they can extend their visa, doing so may incur high cost. For example, the cost of extending a visa is £475 (GOV.UK, 2019a) and £300 per year for the Immigration Health Surcharge (GOV.UK, 2019b). This may imply

that international PhD students tend to have extra pressure to complete their studies before home PhD students due to time limits on their student visas.

Additionally, it is also reported that there are cultural differences in dealing with supervisors. In a qualitative interview study conducted by Winchester-Seeto, et al. (2014), the findings indicate that international PhD students in Australian universities, particularly those from East Asia, Africa and South America, are likely to face difficulties in disagreeing with their supervisors or being assertive when they deal with their supervisors. Similarly, in a qualitative study conducted by Elliot and Kobayashi (2018), findings of interviews with PhD supervisors indicate that international PhD students tend to be reluctant to contradict their supervisors during supervision. This is because teachers in their home countries may be regarded as someone in authority and this may be manifested during interaction with their supervisors. On the contrary, supervisors expect international PhD students to challenge them rather than sitting in silence (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014). This suggests that cultural differences may be another difficulty for international PhD students to deal with. The situation may worsen if supervisors do not understand the cultural norms practised by their PhD students and instead, interpret this as passive and unproductive student behaviour.

In this section, an attempt has been made to discuss other challenges that PhD students face during their studies, i.e. inadequate funding, stress, coming under pressure to complete their studies within the time period of their student visas and cultural differences in dealing with supervisors. Though home PhD students may face challenges and difficulties during their studies, these challenges and difficulties tend to be arguably exacerbated for international PhD students due to a combination of reasons, e.g. linguistic challenges, different academic cultures, stress from visa conditions and the absence of their loved ones. As the focus of this thesis is on the adaptation of international Thai PhD students, the following section will review literature on doctoral identity and a threshold concept, one of the theoretical frameworks, which underpins this research.

2.5 Doctoral Identity

McAlpine and Amundsen (2009) point out that doctoral identity can develop when PhD students take part in the university and the discipline, which helps students feel that they belong to a community, e.g. taking part in the organising committee of a faculty seminar series which provides them with the sense of belonging to the group. This suggests that doctoral identity may not be constructed by students shaping the academic self, but is instead constructed based on communities with which students would like to identify (McAlpine and Amundsen, 2009). Moreover, it may be concluded that doctoral identity is reflected by in-between time of a PhD student and a scholar or a researcher (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). Further, it is suggested that doctoral identity may be constructed by the time-based trajectories of individuals (McAlpine and Lucas, 2011) and by doctoral students' self-reflection (Alexander, Harris-Huemmert and McAlpine, 2014). Thus, the following section will present these aspects in detail.

2.5.1 Doctoral Identity Construction

Doctoral identity may be reflected by in-between time of a PhD researcher and a scholar or a researcher (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). This is called "oscillations between student and academic role-identities" (p.253). To illustrate, in Jazvac-Martek's study, findings from qualitative questionnaire and interview data from PhD students in Canada indicate that participants feel that they are an academic and act like an academic when they have publications accepted, work on publications, and present at conferences. Simultaneously, participants feel that they are still a doctoral student when they receive feedback on their writing from their supervisors or write a book with their supervisors. Noticeably, notions related to a student status still stand because they continuously need advice from their supervisors to improve their work. This suggests that the reflection of doctoral identity in the study can still be demonstrated by unequal academic status between supervisors and PhD participants, i.e. higher academic status of supervisors than PhD participants (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). Moreover, McAlpine and Lucas (2011) state that the passage of time, i.e. individuals' integration of the past, the present and the future has an effect on doctoral students' sense of doctoral identity. The past of students includes their lives and learning

experiences before they started undertaking a PhD. The present is when they study for their PhD, and the future encompasses what students would like to do when they get a PhD. These time-based trajectories are likely to be connected with the three strands, i.e. intellectual, networking and institutional strands. The intellectual strand signifies one's contribution to one's academic discipline, e.g. papers and publications, and this is demonstrated when PhD students attempt to publish papers before they complete the doctoral programme. The academic networking strand concerns the range of local, national and international networks that a person has been and is connected with, e.g. academic collaborations with other researchers, working with specialists and holding membership in disciplinary organisations and on journal boards. The institutional strand includes responsibilities for meeting work expectations and deadlines and resources that an institution could support, e.g. workspace and teaching assistantships. To demonstrate how PhD students constructed their doctoral identities through time in connection with the three strands, interview data from PhD participants in the social sciences in British universities indicate that the intellectual strand tends to be interwoven with doctoral students' future. This is because students who would like to work in academia after getting a PhD would contribute intellectually beyond the thesis. The academic networking strand may be connected with the future orientation and plays an important role in participants' positioning themselves within a community of their future colleagues. In contrast, PhD students who do not seek to be an academic after getting a PhD tend to focus merely on working on their thesis. In terms of institutional strands, participants' participation in teaching and working and interaction with peers and staff may lead to participants' intellectual belonging or connectedness with the department (McAlpine and Lucas, 2011). In addition to the temporal (past-present-future) trajectories, there is a notion that doctoral identity may be demonstrated by doctoral students' self-reflection (Alexander, Harris-Huemmert and McAlpine, 2014). To investigate this notion, the researchers employ data collection tools, i.e. diaries, interviews and a card-sorting activity with doctoral students from universities in the UK. The findings indicate that diaries enable participants to reflect their academic progress, e.g. meeting with their supervisors, presenting at conferences, having the opportunity to work with editors to write a chapter in a book. In the study, participants are also asked to choose to organise the pictogram

cards and explain the cards they choose during the interviews. Arguably, the use of card-sorting activities may serve as a means to reflect what is important to participants during their doctoral studies. To illustrate, a participant describes challenges of reconciliation between doctoral work and other aspects of her professional life based on the selected card (Alexander, Harris-Huemmert and McAlpine, 2014).

The previously discussed conclusion that doctoral identity may be reflected by the transition from a PhD student to a scholar or a researcher may pose a challenge to doctoral students as they may feel disoriented in an attempt to become researchers (Baker and Pifer, 2011). To overcome this obstacle, it is reported that relationships and interactions with other PhD students, faculty members and family are likely to play an important role in helping PhD students· transition into researchers smoothly. This suggests that social connections and networks play an import role in their doctoral study. Baker and Pifer conduct a qualitative interview study with PhD students in the US to explore the role of the effects of social relationships between PhD friends and faculty members in doctoral students' identity development from PhD students to a scholar. The findings demonstrate that relationships and interactions with other PhD friends who are in the same stage of study may assist participants to share their stories and frustration as they may have to deal with a similar situation. Further, participants may benefit from other senior PhD students' support, advice and guidance on writing strategies, e.g. daily or weekly writing goals and successful writing habits. Interestingly, participants' relationships with faculty members or their supervisors may be a useful source of information on their academic careers so that participants can decide whether they are interested in becoming a faculty member after getting a PhD (Baker and Pifer, 2011). Arguably, personal relationships with supervisors and faculty may be connected to the academic network, which is linked with future orientation previously discussed in a study conducted by McAlpine and Lucas (2011). This is because shared information of supervisors or faculty on their life experiences of working in academia may enable PhD students to be able to make decisions as to whether they would like to work as a faculty member after they have a PhD.

This section demonstrates that doctoral identity is likely to be reflected by the in-between period of a PhD student and a scholar or a researcher in one's discipline, which suggests that there may be challenges for PhD students to overcome in their efforts to become researchers. This notion may be relevant to a theoretical framework called threshold concepts. Thus, the following section will discuss this theoretical framework in detail.

2.5.2 Threshold Concepts and Doctoral Education

Threshold concepts are developed by Meyer and Land (2005) and the word "threshold" is a metaphor for a portal. If individuals are able to pass through it, they are likely to clearly understand things that used to be incomprehensible (Meyer and Land, 2005). The notion of threshold concepts is drawn from earlier anthropology research called rites of passage (Meyer and Land, 2006) which means initiation rituals of boy into adult status in a society (Van Gennep, 1960). Threshold concepts are connected with the term 'liminality' (Turner, 1979, p.234), which is derived from Latin *limen* defined as boundary or threshold, and it is employed to highlight the transitional state or "a change of state or status" (Meyer and Land, 2006, p.22). Within an educational setting, to be able to cross the threshold, students are likely to be in a state of 'liminality' (p.16), a state in which a learner lacks authenticity or a state of mimicry (Meyer and Land, 2006). Keefer (2015) explains that liminality can also refer to a period when a person separates from the previous identity but has not yet obtained the new identity – the in-between period of being a postgraduate student and an independent expert or a researcher in one's field. Thus, liminality may convey a sense of inability to get away from difficulties or being "stuck" (p.377), and this reflects the idea that the transition may be problematic and troubling (Meyer and Land, 2005). Arguably, though there may be challenges and difficulties during this period of time, transition from being a PhD student to an independent researcher can mark a turning point in students' growth and development when students manage to cross the threshold. Turner (1979) explains that transition constitutes three phases, i.e. separation, margin (limen or liminal state) and aggregation. Separation refers to the detachment of individuals from an earlier position; the further phase is quite uncertain as it is between the previous and the coming point. Then the final stage marks the end of the transition or the consummation of transition. Arguably, the transition may

mirror the idea that it takes time for individuals to cross portals, which may be, in the case of PhD studies, the reason why it takes many years for a person to earn a doctorate. According to Meyer and Land (2003), threshold concepts consist of five characteristics, which are: firstly transformative - students' changes in personal identity, or worldview after they learn a subject. The second characteristic is irreversible which means it is unlikely that a concept will be forgotten once students understand it. The third characteristic is integrative which refers to the interrelatedness of a concept and other aspects of the same subject. Another characteristic of a threshold concept is that it is bound to define academic borders or disciplinary areas. The final characteristic is that threshold concepts are troublesome as students find knowledge is something difficult to understand. Threshold concepts have been employed as a theoretical framework in research on doctoral student learning to illustrate the liminal stage of PhD students - a state of being stuck which takes several years until they finish a PhD (Kiley, 2009) and how they overcome academic challenges to become a scholar. In the case of international PhD students, the liminal stage may bring multiple challenges to them – from making an effort to gain knowledge and research skills in their discipline to dealing with linguistic challenges and different academic cultures between host and home countries. The liminal stage during doctoral studies is highlighted by Keefer (2015) in a qualitative narrative inquiry which aims to explore doctoral liminality of PhD students from different countries and disciplines. The findings indicate that participants face loneliness, isolation and imposter syndrome or feel inadequate to be in academia to study for a PhD. The liminality also includes an incompatible relationship with supervisors which may cause PhD students to change their supervisors or leave the programme. This is because participants and their supervisors have different academic backgrounds, which subsequently lead to misaligned perspectives. Arguably, the result of Keefer's study implies that liminal periods of doctoral studies may also extend to other challenges, apart from learning aspects, e.g. loneliness and isolation. For international PhD students their liminal periods are arguably even more evident as they have to deal with differing learning cultures and the feeling of loneliness and isolation due to the absence of their loved ones who live in their home countries. Additionally, Amran and Ibrahim (2012) employ the rite of passage, defined as the various stages of the development and changes from a PhD student to a scholar, to reflect their experiences as PhD students in the UK and their

colleagues who receive a doctorate in Malaysia. The findings indicate that the rite of passage entails three stages, i.e. the pre-liminal or separation stage, the liminal stage and re-aggregation or incorporation stage. The pre-liminal or separation stage is when the researchers leave Malaysia to study for a PhD in the UK. This may be the stage when there is change in researchers' daily routine since it is dissimilar to their lives in Malaysia, e.g. the way they dress and free time activities. Then the researchers undergo the liminal stage - a period of time when they feel lost and lonely. In an extreme case of a colleague of the researchers, the colleague faces a huge challenge as the first supervisor decides to terminate his work contract with the university, while the second supervisor accepts an offer from a university in Australia. This colleague also suffers from a tragic loss of her baby. The final stage, re-aggregation or incorporation stage, is when PhD students get a degree and become members of the scholarly community of academia (Amran and Ibrahim, 2012). Arguably, rites of passage also demonstrate personal development and growth of individuals who experience challenges or problems that arise during doctoral studies. Moreover, threshold concepts are employed to examine how a thesis writing workshop assists doctoral students to develop their writing of the literature review (Chatterjee-Padmanabhan, Nielsen and Sanders, 2018). In their qualitative study, participants are PhD students in an Australian university. The participants attend a thesis writing workshop which focuses on developing participants' academic skills in writing the literature review. The findings indicate that participants gain awareness of demonstrating their critiques of the research of others and differences between descriptive and critical writing. Consequently, this learning enables them to develop their own writing to be more critical. Further, participants learn to be more selective about what to include in the literature review (Chatterjee-Padmanabhan, Nielsen and Sanders, 2018). Arguably, these findings imply that other support outside the formal supervision or coursework, which can be the development of writing skills through the process of writing the literature review, may play an important role in helping PhD students get away from a state of being stuck or liminality. In this study, threshold concepts are employed to help explain the findings in terms of linguistic challenges resulting from undertaking a PhD in another language and dealing with different academic cultures. These challenges are faced by Thai international PhD students during their doctoral studies in the UK and reflect their transition from a PhD student to a scholar.

This section demonstrates threshold concepts, which reflect the transitional stage from a PhD student to a scholar, and this transition is likely to be marked by a state of liminality, which may be problematic and troubling. The liminality may arguably pose double difficulties for international PhD students in terms of dealing with linguistic challenges and differing academic orientations between host and home institutions. However, despite facing challenges and difficulties during the transitional state, being able to cross the threshold conveys a sense of both home and international PhD students' growth and development. The following section will discuss experiences of international students returning to their home countries.

2.6 Experiences of International Students Returning to Their Home Countries

This section begins with international students' challenges of re‑adaptation to culture and society upon their return to their home country. The focus then shifts to their re‑adaptation from living and studying abroad to working in institutions or organisations. Finally, attention is drawn to advantages as well as disadvantages of studying abroad.

2.6.1 Challenges of Re‑adaptation to Home Culture and Society

When international students return to their home country, it is interesting to note that they may have to adapt themselves to their home culture. In a qualitative study conducted by Alandejani (2013), the interview findings demonstrate that Saudi Arabian international PhD returnees from the US and the UK feel frustrated when they again find themselves adapting to the norms of society and culture of their home country. This is because they think that their co‑nationals are likely to be over‑dependent on others as some middle to upper class families tend to hire helpers in their houses. The participants feel frustrated as their co‑nationals ask them why they do not hire helpers in their houses. Participants learn to re‑adapt to their home country by being aware of their high expectations and what they experience upon their return may not be as good as they expected. With acknowledgement that some people in the developed countries may hire helpers

to do the housework, the idea that individuals should not ask for help in cleaning their houses may convey the idea of individualism - individuals taking responsibility for taking care of themselves. Another challenge is that female participants are again expected to be accompanied by male guardians and female participants are also not allowed by law to drive a car. This sharply contrasts with their lives in the US where they enjoy going out without their husbands and they can drive cars. Although Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on female drivers in 2018 (see BBC, 2019), these findings suggest that participants' lives in the US may influence them to become more independent as they prefer to conduct their own lives without the help of anyone (Alandejani, 2013). Arguably, the findings of Alandejani's study may indicate the evolved sense of participants' cultural identity, which is defined as individuals' sense of belonging to a cultural group and symbols, values, norms, and traditions shared in the group (Liu, Volcic and Gallois, 2011). This is because participants may become more independent when they live and study in the US, but there are things they cannot do by themselves when they return to their home country.

2.6.2 Re-adaptation to Institutions or Organisations

Literature on international students demonstrates that there may be two aspects in terms of their re-adaptation to institutions or organisations, i.e. different work practices and high expectation of colleagues or employers. Concerning different work practices, findings from a qualitative interview study conducted by Robinson-Pant (2009) indicate that a PhD returnee from Iran point out that the value of teaching outweighs the value of research-based practice in his university in Iran. This implies that the university that this participant works for does not support research-based practice. The perceived difference between the academic cultures of host and home universities is likely to make participants think that they are unlikely to employ what they learnt while conducting research during a PhD in the UK. In another mixed-methods study conducted by Wang (2016) with Chinese international returnees, findings of the survey indicate that 50% of the returnees think that they do not receive support from their universities in China, while 33% feel uncertain. The interview findings provide an account about the lack of facility, e.g. a laboratory, for participants to conduct research (Wang, 2016). This suggests that the value of conducting research may not be promoted by

participants' universities in China. Arguably, there is contrasting evidence that conducting research may be regarded as important for those who work in academia outside the UK. This complements the fact that one of the promotion criteria or criteria to acquire academic tenure depends on having research articles published in academic journals (González, Liu and Shu, 2012), suggesting that value may be placed on conducting research within the university culture outside the UK now.

Another issue of re-adaptation to institutions and organisations is that colleagues and employers may have high expectations of international students upon their return to their home country. This is supported by a qualitative study conducted by Kiley (1999) with Indonesian postgraduate students who gain a Master's degree and a doctorate from Australia. Though it is a much earlier study, its findings indicate the high expectations of international returnees' colleagues and employers in their home country. Kiley's study demonstrates that participants are likely to be appointed to an important administrative position in the university they work for upon their return, e.g. a Head of Department and a member of the publishing centre of their university. In some cases, participants state that they may be the most junior person appointed to such a position (Kiley, 1999). Arguably, these findings reflect the perceived belief that the quality of universities abroad may be higher than the universities in the home country of the international students. Consequently, people in their home countries tend to assume that international returnees are automatically capable and competent to hold an important position in an organisation or institution.

2.6.3 Advantages of Studying Abroad

It is reported that studying abroad may give international students three advantages, i.e. self-change, intercultural competence and opportunities to be exposed to different academic conventions. Regarding self-change, it is pointed out that international students may be more independent than when they are in their home countries. In a qualitative study conducted by Gill (2007), the findings of interviews with postgraduate Chinese students who study in a British university indicate that participants are likely to experience living on their own, e.g. cooking, washing and shopping for groceries. Further, they are likely to increase

their problem-solving skills, e.g. planning trips and searching for part time jobs by themselves. Liu and Winder (2014) add that living abroad may give international students opportunities to be able to do things that are not available in their home countries. Consequently, this may enable them to gain new skills, and thus may lead to further growth in ways that are not available previously. In addition to becoming independent, it is stated that international students may maintain their positive thinking during the difficult time when they live and study abroad. This notion is supported by a study conducted by Moores and Popadiuk (2011) with international graduate and undergraduate students enrolled at a university in Canada. The interview findings indicate that participants are likely to show their positive thinking when they face obstacles, e.g. feeling depressed, having self-doubt and the demands of being independent to conduct their lives abroad. It can be argued that individuals may not need to go and study abroad to adopt their positive attitude to life. However, the degree of independence that international students gained may be more demanding than being independent in their home countries due to the absence of help and support of their loved ones. The second advantage as a result of studying abroad may be the development of intercultural experiences, i.e. acquiring a greater knowledge and understanding of Western and British culture (Gill, 2007). This may also lead to the change in bias and prejudice against other people from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, the results of a qualitative interview study conducted with Chinese international postgraduate students in the UK indicate that a participant's old prejudices, grievances and stereotypical misunderstandings between Japan and China have changed his view about Japanese culture and Japanese people after he lived with a Japanese flatmate. Similarly, in a mixed-method study conducted by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), the findings of an interview with a Chinese international postgraduate returnee indicate that a participant is likely to understand his British boss in a foreign company far better than his Chinese co-nationals can. Finally, though studying abroad may pose a challenge to international students, it can arguably provide numerous opportunities for them to be exposed to different academic conventions, e.g. demonstrating their critical thinking when they write their thesis or dissertation, oral participation in classrooms and developing their self-directed learning habits, among others (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2016).

2.6.4 Disadvantages of Studying Abroad

The disadvantages of studying abroad may include the feelings of missing the loved ones of the international students while they are abroad, losing career opportunities, and the issue of the brain drain.

It is reported that international students tend to miss their family when they are abroad, and they are more likely to have these feelings when there are special times, e.g. Christmas or their birthday (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016; Sawir, et al., 2008). This is because their significant people are not with them particularly during special occasions and celebrations (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016; Sawir, et al., 2008). Though some may argue that using technology can facilitate the communication of international students with their loved ones in the home country, virtual communication may not replace face-to-face interaction. This is because virtual communication cannot give people physical and emotional support e.g. a reassuring hug from a loved one. Thus, it can be argued that face-to-face interaction remains important for international students who live far away from their loved ones. Additionally, in a qualitative interview study conducted by Le (2014), the findings of Vietnamese international postgraduate taught students who return from the US after their graduation indicate that some participants are unable to come back to their former positions due to the economic downturn. Some also state that they may lose career opportunities to apply to good workplaces because of an economic recession when they return to Vietnam (Le, 2014). Arguably, the findings in Le's study may be incongruent with the belief that graduation from a foreign country is likely to give international students opportunities to get a good job in their home country. The final disadvantage may be the issue of the brain drain, which is defined as the migration of highly educated individuals from developing countries to developed countries (Beine, Docquier and Rapoport, 2008). A possible reason may stem from poor working conditions (Delicado, 2017). According to Delicado's study, Portugese international PhD returnees from the UK are likely to be weighed down by teaching and bureaucratic duties, temporary contracts with limited welfare rights and lower wages. Consequently, this situation is likely to force them to leave Portugal to find a job in other countries (Delicado, 2017). However, being able to find a job abroad is unlikely to concern international PhD returnees who win a scholarship from

sponsors in their home country due to a condition of the scholarship, which stipulates that international students have to return to their home countries (Gribble, 2008). In the case of students who may have an option of staying in the host country, losing well-educated human resource may lead to a shortage of highly skilled workers in the sending country (Drain, Docquier and Rapoport, 2018). Some may argue that brain drain may also, in fact, generate international networks and research collaboration between expatriate researchers and colleagues in their home countries (Yang and Welch, 2010). However, there may be certain restrictive factors of research collaboration with researchers in the home country as the colleagues in their home country may instead prefer to do consultancy or assess projects, review proposals and have meetings to earn more money rather than conducting research (Yang and Welch, 2010).

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates the experiences of international students, which include both challenges and opportunities when this cohort live and study in a foreign country. Those who study for a PhD abroad tend to face multiple issues regarding transition from a PhD student to a scholar or a researcher. The final section highlights the experiences of international students and international PhD returnees in their re-adaptation to their home culture and institutions upon return to their home countries. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad are discussed.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Construction of Culture and Transnationalism

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses theoretical frameworks employed in this body of work. It starts by discussing Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures, followed by criticism and support of them and the application of these dimensions to aspects of the lives of international students. Then, another theoretical framework, i.e. transnationalism is also presented. Thus, the following section will explore these theoretical frameworks in detail.

3.2 Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures

Hofstede (1980) and his research team employed quantitative questionnaires in 66 countries with about 88,000 respondents who were sales and service employees of subsidiaries of IBM, an American multinational corporation. Attitude surveys were conducted to investigate employees' values and beliefs across nations (Hofstede, 1980). The aim of this large-scale research is to identify cultural differences of people from different countries. According to Hofstede (1980), there are broadly three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming. This mental programming is defined as people's patterns of thinking, feelings and behavior that are shared with other people who live within the same environment. Further, the programming differentiates the members of one group of people from others. It is, thus, similar to culture (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Within the mental programming, there are three levels, i.e. universal, collective and individual levels (see Figure 3). The universal level is a behavior shared by all humans, e.g. laughing, crying and aggressive behavior. The opposite of universal level is the individual level of human programming, which is a unique part, and is the level of individual personality. Between these two levels is the collective level, which is shared with a certain group, that differs from other groups.
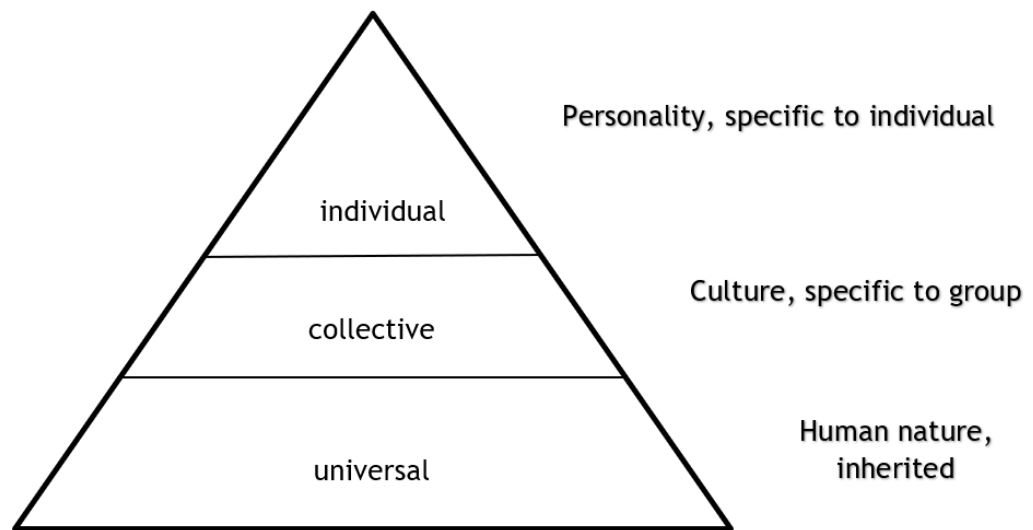
Figure 3.1 Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming (Hofstede, 1980, p.16; Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, p.4)

To predict human mental programming, the collective level was measured in research conducted by Hofstede (1980); this collective level is called national culture, which consists of dimensions that are concerned with differences between cultures based on dominant value systems (Hofstede and McCrae, 2004). National cultures are defined as the unwritten rules, e.g. greeting, demonstrating feelings or not demonstrating feelings, keeping physical distance from others, which differentiate the members of one group of people from another (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In the research, each country is assigned a score on a 0-100 point scale in each category depending on how it compares to other countries in relation to each dimension of national culture. The six dimensions of national culture include: (1) Power Distance (2) Uncertainty Avoidance, (3) Collectivism and Individualism, (4) Masculinity and Femininity, (5) Short and Long-term oriented countries and (6) Indulgent and Self-restraint oriented countries. The first dimension, national cultures of power distance, means people in a country accept that there is an individual who has more power than another individual, e.g. a teacher-student inequality in which teachers are respected by students. There are two categories of Power Distance, i.e. high and low power distance, depending on a country's index score - high scores meaning high power distance. East European, Latin, Asian and African countries are suggested to have high power distance index

scores, while English-speaking Western countries get lower index scores. It has been suggested that people in low Power Distance countries attach importance to independence whereas people in high Power Distance countries stress the importance of conformity. For example, students in low Power Distance countries tend to argue with teachers or express their disagreement with teachers whereas students in high Power Distance countries are unlikely to contradict their teachers or express their opinions in class. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, the focus is on the extent to which people in a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unstructured situations and cope with this feeling by creating beliefs and institutions, e.g. laws and rules and criticism of deviant opinions. For example, teachers in high uncertainty avoidance countries tend to be expected to have all the answers when being asked by students, whereas teachers in low uncertainty avoidance may say that they do not know the answer. A country that exhibits a high score is considered as high uncertainty avoidance, e.g. Latin American countries, Japan and Mediterranean countries. In Greece, for example, a high score of uncertainty avoidance is observed. Possibly, this points to how they expressed the notion of uncertainty avoidance. Another dimension of national cultures, collectivism and individualism, shows the extent to which people in a particular society are integrated into groups, and this, in turn, creates a close long-term commitment to the member group. Hofstede explains that the sense of group membership may be generated from people who live in an extended family, e.g. grandparents, uncles and aunts, which results in learning to think of themselves as a "we" group or in-group (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). This contrasts with an individualistic society, which can be characterised as a nuclear family, a family consisting of parents and children, in which children are expected to leave their parental home, and this may reduce the relationships with their parents. Thus, people in an individualistic society may learn to think of themselves as "I" identities; they tend to be less attached to their group membership. Considering masculine and feminine countries, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) point out that a masculine society stands for preference in society for assertiveness, toughness and material rewards for success whereas a feminine society represents a preference for modesty and caring for quality of life. The higher score a country receives, the more it tends to be feminine; the lower score is defined as favouring

masculine traits. For example, people in a feminine country may prefer working reduced hours rather than more salary whereas people in a masculine country may choose to work long hours to earn more salary (Hofstede, 1980). The fifth dimension, i.e. short and long-term orientation, is subsequently added to the dimensions of national cultures with the permission of Michael Harris Bond who employed questionnaires to measure Chinese cultural values and conducted a study with 50 males and 50 female students in 22 countries (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). However, it is a small-scale study as it covers only 22 countries and 100 samples (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, the dimensions of national cultures are replicated and extended based on the analysis of the World Values Survey (2019) (WVS) that covers more than 100 countries (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010; for more information on WVS see http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp). Within this dimension, short-term oriented countries, stands for virtues related to the past and present more than long-term fulfilment, while long-term oriented countries are linked with the values of frugality and perseverance as a way to prepare for the future. Countries that rank high on the short-term orientation are the US, the UK, African and Muslim countries, while the long-term orientation includes China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). For example, children in long-term oriented culture tend to learn to delay immediate gratification of their desires and to pursue a goal tenaciously while those in short-term oriented culture are likely to lean towards immediate need gratification and "keeping up with the Joneses" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p.215). The final dimension is indulgent and self-restraint oriented countries. Indulgence refers to allowing gratification of human desires connected to enjoying life and having fun whereas its opposite pole, restraint, is the conviction that gratification and human desires need to be controlled (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). For example, people in a restrained country may put a value on the maintenance of order as a national goal rather than other goals while those in an indulgent country may see freedom of speech as an important goal (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). In this body of work, two dimensions of national cultures are employed, i.e. power distance and individualism-collectivism to demonstrate the impact of Thai cultural identity on the psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD

students in the UK. These two dimensions are used to explain participants' interactions with their supervisors and other Thai and international students in the UK as well as their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, i.e. becoming an independent person and their confidence in conveying debate and criticism, which pose challenges to them upon their return to Thailand.

As mentioned earlier, despite having been considered as an influential work in cross-cultural studies and the subsequent extensive citation (Schmitz and Weber, 2014), there are criticisms of the study. Thus, the following section will demonstrate arguments both against and in support of Hofstede's study.

3.3 Criticism and Support of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures

There are criticisms that Hofstede's findings are quite outdated as the study was conducted in 1980 which is not up-to-date data for the twenty-first century, and some researchers question whether the findings may change as time passes (Ghemawat and Reiche, 2011; Jones, 2007; Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2012). However, Beugelsdijk, Maseland, and Van Hoorn (2015) argue that Hofstede's country rankings are not obsolete and the relative rankings of countries on Hofstede's cultural dimensions are quite stable based on their data from the World Values Survey (2019) (WVS) to replicate four of Hofstede's dimensions. Arguably, though the findings in Hofstede's study are about 30 years old, the study provides the first large-scale empirical data that no study since has ever produced (Hollensen, 2011). In the years that follow his study, Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures have been employed in a number of disciplines, e.g. business (see Cetinkaya, 2014; Dodd, Frijns and Gilbert, 2015; Lund, Scheer and Kozlenkova, 2013), communications (see Tsatsou, 2012), political science (see Zhao, 2013), education (see Bissessar, 2018; Kim and McLean, 2014), psychology (see Dirilen-Gumus, 2017) and Sociology (see Danilova and Yadov, 2010). This conveys that despite all the criticisms, Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures are still arguably popular. In my research, I am using some of the key ideas proposed by Hofstede, i.e. Power Distance, and Collectivism and Individualism, in

the area of cross-cultural education with regard to the adaptation and re-adaptation of Thai international PhD students and returnees.

In the context of international students, Hofstede's dimensions have been used to explain international students' adaptation when they live and study abroad. Thus, the following section will focus on this aspect in detail.

3.4 Application of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures

Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures have been employed as a theoretical framework to investigate academic and social aspects of international students when they live and study abroad. Rienties, Luchoomun and Tempelaar (2014), for example, compare academic and social adjustment of international Postgraduate Taught students (PGT) with the adjustment of Dutch PGT students. A Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), divided into four scales, i.e. academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and attachment, was distributed to international master's students and Dutch master's students at universities in the Netherlands. The study classifies international students according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions to distinguish the academic and social adjustment of Dutch and international students. The findings of this study indicate that students from individualistic countries, e.g. the UK or the Netherlands, have on average higher 'academic adjustment' scores than international students from collectivistic countries, e.g. China or South Korea. The findings from this study also reveal that international students from Southern and Eastern Asia face more challenges of academic, social and emotional adjustment than European students and non-European international students, i.e. students from Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. For example, adjustment to university life in the Netherlands tends to be more emotionally difficult for international students from Asia. However, the study does not give details of the particular challenges faced by Asian international students. Other additional factors that contribute to the challenges of academic and social adaptation of international students could be the lack of language proficiency of international students that may result in having difficulty in taking notes, speaking in class,

understanding lectures and reading assignments (Mori, 2000) as well as making friends with local 'home' students (Zhou and Zhang, 2014). Additionally, Nguyen, Terlouw and Pilot (2006) make a connection between student learning patterns and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. To illustrate, in the Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) found in Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia, teachers are considered as givers of knowledge. This is because teachers are models of society's acceptable behaviour and treated with respect and deference. Consequently, students are not encouraged to ask teachers questions or openly challenge views. Experiencing supported opportunities to debate and have dialogue with teachers and their peers reflects a particular learning culture, which is likewise often at odds in terms of the development of critical thinking (Nguyen, Terlouw and Pilot, 2006). This contrasts sharply with the emphasis on principles of reasoning of Western education whereby students are positively encouraged to give reasons from an early age; to justify, explain, hold opinion (Doddington, 2007). Additionally, Western learning environment stresses importance of two-way dialogue between teachers and students (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007). These differences in the Eastern and Western educational approaches are noted to pose a challenge to international students, particularly those from Asia, as their previous learning experiences may not accommodate their learning needs and expectations when they study in Western universities (Edgeworth and Eiseman, 2007). Interview findings of international undergraduate students from Asia indicate that tutorial discussion, having to give opinions or argue with teachers in their classrooms in Australia contrasts with their classrooms in China where teachers teach, and students learn. Another example is Townsend and Poh's (2008) qualitative study with international students from Hong Kong, Malaysia and China, who study in Australia, in order to investigate the similarities and differences international students encounter in comparison to their homeland while studying and living in Australia. The findings indicate that students have difficulties in adapting to Australian academic culture as they receive only general ideas and guidance from Australian lecturers whereas lecturers in their home country give them answers. Thus, this evidence indicates that when participants study in Australia, they have to be more independent than in their home country (Townsend and Poh, 2008). Arguably, despite these difficulties, studying in

Western universities provides international students with opportunities to develop their thinking, independent learning and problem-solving capacity (Gill, 2007; Ramsay, Barker and Jones, 1999). To illustrate, hearing different perspectives of other students during tutorial groups may broaden international students' intellectual horizons. Hofstede's dimensions are also employed in the area of cross-cultural supervision in the Danish context to highlight exemplars of contrasting supervisors' and international PhD students' experience concerning academic and psychosocial adaptations (Elliot and Kobayashi, 2018). The findings of qualitative interviews with international PhD students and experienced Danish supervisors stress that Danish supervisors notice how Asian international PhD students seldom challenge authority. This is explained by Hofstede's notion of power distance that individuals from the societal culture of hierarchical-related attitude are likely to hesitate to express an alternative view. Such asymmetrical relationship may also lead to weakened independent thinking or critical thinking as PhD participants from hierarchical societies tend to believe in authority whereas Danish culture accepts that subordinates could have a disagreement with superiors. Additionally, international PhD students call Danish supervisors by Doctor or Dr Professor to show respect for authority, contrasting with Danish culture as Dr and Professor are not used to address superiors. Interestingly, the study points out Danish supervisors' attempt to pursue symmetrical relationships by impressing on their international PhD students the idea that they can have disagreements with their supervisors. The practice of Danish supervisors is an exemplar of empowering and supporting international PhD students to assist them to adapt to the new doctoral supervision context (Elliot and Kobayashi, 2018). Arguably, social hierarchy may have an impact on students' behaviour towards their teachers. However, developing critical thinking may depend on certain factors apart from the impact of culture. For instance, students from non-Western educational backgrounds may face the challenge of questioning their lecturers or participating in discussions or debates in their classrooms abroad, behavior that they may not have been exposed to in classrooms in their home country. Furthermore, it depends on students' level of English language to be able to read and write critically, as students who are not proficient in English may misunderstand the arguments in text due to the unfamiliar rhetoric used (Bali, 2015). This then points to the idea that there are

multiple factors underpinning issues in relation to international students' capacity to think analytically but also critically.

In this body of work, Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures, i.e. power distance and individualism-collectivism, are employed specifically to explore the impact of Thai cultural identity on psychosocial adaptation and academic acculturation of Thai international PhD students in the UK and their re-adaptation upon their return to Thailand.

In addition to the threshold concept and Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures, this study also employs transnationalism as a theoretical framework. Thus, the following section will discuss this framework in detail.

3.5 Transnationalism

Transnationalism is defined as the processes by which immigrants have ties that link together their home country and their host country (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992). These ties include sending remittances, their visits to their home country, and maintaining contacts with friends and families in the home country. They also entail organisational, religious and political hometown associations which are established in a host country. The aim of establishing these associations is to enable migrants to take action to help their co-nationals living in their home country, e.g. sending money to support an older person living in the hometown of their home country (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992). In this study, transnationalism is employed to investigate multiple links of Thai international PhD students and Thai PhD returnees while living and studying in the UK and upon their return to Thailand. Noticeably, this definition of transnationalism embodies both a macro and micro scale of a wide range of activities (Li and Stodolska, 2006) or alternatively "from above" and "from below" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998, p.3). On a macro scale, transnationalism covers economic and political activities of multinational corporations and organisations, e.g. the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, which reflect global exchange of capital, trade and people. On the other hand, the micro level of activities or the transnationalism from below sets in motion small-scale activity, e.g. sending monetary remittances, migrants' visits

to their birthplace and maintaining contact with friends and families in their country of origin (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). In this study, attention is paid to the micro, idiographic level since the context is concerned with Thai international PhD students as transnational actors, both while they are in the UK and when they return to Thailand. Moreover, the concept of transnationalism demonstrates that immigrants can maintain culture of their home country (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999) and link them with the economic, social and political issues of their home country (Lima, 2010). Noticeably, the definition of transnationalism proposed by Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton is in the context of immigrants or refugees who maintain their links with their home country. There is another broader definition of transnationalism proposed by Vertovec (1999, 2009), which focuses on "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (p. 447). In the context of international students, transnationalism is employed to investigate multiple links of international students during and after their studies abroad, e.g. their links with other students from the same country when studying abroad; and with old friends and other students who studied in the same university upon their return to their home country (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015).

For the purposes of the research presented in this study, it is argued that transnationalism can also include migration associated with international students in terms of their connections to people and places during their studies abroad and their return to their home country. Thus, transnationalism is employed in this body of work to investigate Thai international PhD students' multiple ties with people in the UK, i.e. international PhD friends and other Thai international friends, and ties with non-Thai friends in the UK, their Thai friends in Thailand and other Thai PhD returnees when they return to Thailand. The use of transnationalism as a theoretical framework in this body of work is a novel application as there are seldom any studies that employ this framework for the analysis of the experiences of international students and returnees, particularly Thai international PhD students and Thai PhD returnees.

This section presents the definition of transnationalism and its application in this study. The following section presents the use of transnationalism in the context of international students as it is relevant to the area of this study.

3.5.1 Transnationalism in the Contexts of International Students

Transnationalism is important in this body of work as it demonstrates multiple links that Thai international PhD students and returnees have from when they were in the UK and after returning to Thailand. Transnationalism in terms of links with other Thai PhD friends in the UK plays an important role in giving participants emotional support, enables them to learn different cultures and makes them feel connected with the UK even after their return to Thailand. In the context of international students, transnationalism has been used in research with international undergraduates, postgraduate taught students and PhD students to demonstrate the links of international students between their home country and the host country and the mobility of their family coming to see them in the host country. Concerning their transfer to the host country, Collins (2008) conducts research to explore transnational movement of South Korean international students in New Zealand and their resultant social networks during their study abroad and upon their return to their home country. In Collins' study, transnational movement occurs when the South Korean international students planning to study abroad seek help from education agents in terms of travel and visa arrangements and accommodation to facilitate their arrival in New Zealand. With regard to the mobility of their family to visit them in the host country, Li and Stodolska (2006) conduct a qualitative study to investigate the leisure experience of Chinese international graduate students who stayed in the US for two months up to five years. The results from semi‐structured interviews indicate that participants choose to travel or invite their family members to travel with them in the US instead of going back to China. This is because they are unable to see their family for three years owing to strict visa requirements. Arguably, this may affect emotional well-being of international postgraduate taught students and PhD students as they may feel homesick or depressed. Consequently, they may lose concentration or fail to attend lectures and seminars, which may have a negative

impact on their academic performance. Additionally, transnationalism is employed to explain international students' ties with their home country. These ties occur when international students socialise with other international friends who come from the same country to live and study abroad. In the same study, the findings indicate that Korean international students in New Zealand continue to maintain relationships with co-national friends by engaging in leisure activities together, e.g. going to have food in a Korean restaurant, going to Korean grocery stores. Always interacting with people from the same country might be comforting but, arguably, this also implies closing various opportunities for learning. This is because the lack of socialisation with other international friends or home students can arguably lead to ghettoisation or interaction taking place with conational friends when international students study abroad (Brown and Richards, 2012). Consequently, ghettoisation can hinder the development of international students' good command of English and learning about other cultures. Ties with international students' home country can also happen when they communicate virtually over the Internet with their friends and family who live in their home country. In a mixed-methods study conducted by Collins (2009), the findings demonstrate that Korean international students maintain the links with their friends and family in South Korea by using Cyworld, the personal homepages of their online diary-writings. Cyworld enables them to share their experiences in New Zealand by posting their photographs or sending messages to their friends, family and other Korean users. Arguably, this type of virtual connection helps this particular sample of Korean international students feel less lonely or isolated when they first arrive in a foreign country. It may also facilitate communication transnationally and it is likely to enable them to maintain regular contact with their loved ones due to the absence of face-to-face relationships. Consequently, upon their return to their home country they may face less challenges of catching up with their friends than those who have rarely made or even lost contact with friends (Collins, 2009). Another type of ties with international students' home country is when they feel connected to their home culture when living abroad. In a study by Jung (2015), Korean international undergraduate students in the US feel connected to Korean culture when they go to Koreatown, a place where there are Korean shops and restaurants in Atlanta. Finally, transnationalism is employed to

explore international students' multiple links with different groups of people during and after their studying abroad. In a qualitative study conducted by Moon and Shin (2019), the interview findings indicate that international undergraduate and graduate students from countries in Asia who study in universities in Japan have ties with other international students in their classrooms, e.g. exchanging their ideas of the subject in their field of study. The findings in Moon and Shin's study demonstrate that interacting with other international students assists participants to see different viewpoints and opinions of people from different cultures. In another study, the mixed-methods findings in a study conducted by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) indicate that Chinese international students who have returned to China in the last 27 years have links with different social networks, i.e. links with other Chinese returnees to share their experiences of living and studying in the UK together and their old friends, which assist them to re-integrate into their home environment. Although the design of the research is robust and statistically powerful in terms of a 20-month mixed-methods study and mixed-methods approaches, the inclusion of Chinese returnees to China in the last 27 years seems to be a long period of time for participants to reflect upon the experiences of their overseas studies.

This section presents the use of transnationalism in the area of international students to investigate international students' mobility, their links with the home country when studying abroad and multiple links upon their return to their home country. The following section will demonstrate how the three conceptual frameworks, i.e. Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures, threshold concepts and transnationalism, are connected.

3.6 The Connection between Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures, Threshold Concepts and Transnationalism

Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures

The unwritten rules which differentiate the members of one group of people from another

(high Power Distance, collectivism)

Threshold concepts

The state of being stuck which conveys the transition from a postgraduate student to an independent researcher

(academic challenges, transition to an independent researcher)

Transnationalism

Multiple links of international students during and after their studies abroad

(reflecting collectivism, evolved sense of Thai cultural identity due to social links)

Figure 3. 2 The Links of the Conceptual Framework

This body of work draws upon a combination of Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures, the threshold concepts and transnationalism to explore the impact of Thai cultural identity on the adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK and, subsequently on their re-adaptation to the Thai context upon their return to Thailand. In this research study, Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures are employed as an overarching theory for Study 1 and Study 2. Figure 3.2 denotes how Hofstede's dimensions, in terms of high Power Distance and collectivism of Thai cultural identity, are linked with the threshold concepts. This explains why back home, hierarchy and collectivist practices may prohibit Thai students from adopting certain learning habits, particularly debating and critiquing in class. Thai students are aware that doing so could potentially lead to scenarios where their teachers may lose face and in turn, it may likewise threaten social harmony between them. This is important to understand because when Thai students decide to undertake a PhD in the UK, this is a crucial skill and is very necessary for obtaining a PhD, e.g. demonstrating critical thinking and conveying an authoritative voice in one's thesis. However, since these skills are not encouraged and tend not to be developed within the study context in Thailand, Thai

international PhD students abroad often find it challenging to demonstrate these skills in writing their theses and, thus, find themselves in a state of liminality or being stuck. Additionally, Figure 3.2 also indicates the interconnection between Hofstede's dimensions and transnationalism where the notion of collectivism is emphasised, even reinforced during Thai international PhD students' likelihood to pursue close and intimate links by befriending fellow Thai international students abroad. For example, a group of Thai international students helps their Thai friend who moves out of her flat by carrying her belongings to a new flat – a practice signifying a collectivistic trait. At the same time, Thai international students' links with other people abroad also leads to their evolved sense of Thai cultural value of status and respect. Their observation of what is regarded as the norm in the host country leads them to reflect on the practice back home. For example, Thai international PhD students may compare the way that teachers abroad are called by their first name with the way they call their Thai teachers by the word "Ajarn" which means a teacher to show respect. Consequently, this poses a challenge to Thai international PhD returnees when they return to Thailand as they tend to question status and respect in Thai society. Moreover, the potential link between transnationalism and the threshold concepts could lead to explaining how cognitive growth (e.g. research competence through being a more reflective, analytical and critical thinker) gained from an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity might lead a person to question status and respect (as informed by their links and interactions with people in the UK). In turn, this can greatly help as they write research and academic papers more critically. This demonstrates a form of transition from being Thai postgraduate students who experience the state of being stuck in demonstrating their critical thinking in writing their theses to becoming independent researchers who can finally manage to adopt a critical attitude and employ it for the benefit of their academic work.

3.7 Conclusion

Hofstede's dimensions play an important role in exploring the adaptation of international students, particularly Asian students, who come from very different cultural backgrounds, to live and study in a foreign country, e.g. UK. These dimensions also accentuate differences in academic practices between their home

countries and Western universities, which are likely to pose challenges to international students when they study abroad. Additionally, transnationalism shows international students' mobility and their multiple ties and links across borders, i.e. bonds with friends and family in their home country when they live and study abroad and bonds with old friends and others who share similar experiences of study-abroad upon their return to their home country. These two theoretical frameworks are employed in this body of work since they are appropriate for the purpose, i.e. a two-fold study that examines not only the experiences of a specific group of international students undertaking doctoral education and how this impacts on their cultural identity, but also, continues with their experience following their PhD completion and all the subsequent effects it entails. Hofstede's dimensions are useful in exploring the role that culture plays in the adaptation of Thai international PhD students to their lives and studies in the UK and their re-adaptation upon return to Thailand. Transnationalism, on the other hand, is apt as a theoretical lens for analysing these Thai students' connections to people and places during their studies in the UK and, even after they return to Thailand on completion of their degrees in the UK. The next chapter gives details and illustrates how these frameworks are specifically situated in the context of Thai international PhD students who pursue their studies in the UK.

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4.1 Introduction

This qualitative study investigates the impact of Thai cultural identity, defined as the sense of belonging to a cultural group and norms and traditions that are shared in the group (Liu, Volcic and Gallois, 2011), on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students during their studies in the UK. Thai international PhD students may perceive their experiences of studying for a PhD abroad as challenging since they have to live in a country, which differs from their home country and different academic cultural conventions (Nomnian, 2017a). Concurrently, such experiences may enable them to link their home and host country through their social interactions with other Thai cohorts and new international PhD friends. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to locate the analysis of Thai international PhD students' experiences in the theoretical frameworks of Hofstede's (1980; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) Dimensions of National Cultures, threshold concepts (Meyer and Land, 2005) and transnationalism (Vertovec, 1999; 2009). Through these theoretical lenses, the aim is to document the meanings and experiences of Thai international students as they commit to international PhD study in order to enhance their professional and personal development.

In this study, photo-elicitation interviews were employed as a method by which to facilitate in-depth interviews. Photo-elicitation is a participatory method which enables participants to produce and employ photographs as a means to promote highly personal reflective views (Harper, 2002). Thus, photo-elicitation interviews offer advantages. These include: (a) to create further insights into cultural and symbolic objects such as images of sculptures, food, clothing and marriage and

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funeral rituals (Wagner, 2011; Willig, 2013); (b) to facilitate discussions of abstract and metaphorical concepts captured in the photographs (Eisner, 1991; Rose, 2014) and (c) to strengthen and increase trustworthiness of findings (Clark, 2013). In this study, data were analysed according to the methodological principles outlined for Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic Analysis is defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (p.79). A theme is defined as "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p.82). Owing to Study 1's exploratory nature, Thematic Analysis was employed due to its flexibility to determine themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

This chapter aims to provide details of how Thai cultural identity may have an impact on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students during their studies in the UK. As this study is in the context of Thai international PhD students, the first section will provide the background and context, which details current trends of Thai international PhD students in the UK and information on their decisions to study in the UK. The focus then shifts to the range of issues relevant to them while they are studying abroad and how these issues and experiences impact on their own Thai cultural identity. Relevant theoretical frameworks will be highlighted and the research questions going forward will be stated.

4.2 The Context

This study is in the context of internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) owing to the increasing number of students who are enrolling in educational institutions outside their home country (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2011).

Among international students, Thai international students in the UK are likely to rank as one of the top ten sending countries outside the European Union (UKCISA, 2017). According to HESA (2019a), 700 Thai international PhD students registered at British universities in the academic year 2017-18. According to the Civil Service Commission (2019) (CSC) of Thailand, 442 Thai international PhD students have

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won scholarships from private and government-based institutions to undertake a PhD in the UK in 2019. It has been reported that the UK and the US are the most popular destinations for Thai international students to study abroad (see the Civil Service Commission, 2017). There are a number of studies that have highlighted reasons behind the decisions of Thai international students to study in the UK (Buddhichiwin, 2013; Lertjanyakit and Bunchapattanasakda, 2015; Tarry, 2008). The findings of a mixed-method study conducted with Thai international postgraduate taught (PGT) students in the UK by Buddhichiwin (2013) demonstrate that Thai participants' main reason for studying in the UK may be due to relatively short course lengths of these PGT programmes. This means that the cost of study could be minimised compared to longer course lengths. Interestingly, a quantitative study conducted by British Council (2016) suggests that more than 50 percent of Thai participants decide to study abroad due to their belief that overseas education offers better quality than education in Thailand. Other decisions also include the opportunity to improve their English, enhance their career prospects by taking a high-quality education abroad (British Council, 2016; Tarry, 2008) and to gain life experiences resulting from being exposed to different cultures (Lertjanyakit and Bunchapattanasakda, 2015). Noticeably, the decisions that Thai international students made to embark on international study are likely to be similar to those of international students from other countries (King and Sondhi, 2018).

The majority of research on Thai international students tends to focus on Thai undergraduate and postgraduate taught students' decisions to study in the UK (Buddhichiwin, 2013; Lertjanyakit and Bunchapattanasakda, 2015; Tarry, 2008). This suggests that there is a gap in the literature regarding Thai international PhD students' experiences when living and studying in the UK. A research study conducted by Cleary (2016) focuses on Thai international PGT students' experiences when they study in the UK, whereas Nomnian (2017a) investigates the relationships of Thai international PhD students with their supervisors in Australia. Nomnian's study has provided insight into the challenges that Thai international PhD students face during supervision and their solutions to these challenges; his study will be discussed in the following section. Noticeably, Nomnian's research

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does not include psychosocial adaptation of this cohort - with a focus merely on academic aspects. Cleary's research indicates psychosocial adaptation when Thai international PGT students engage in social activities with both Thai friends and friends from different countries, e.g. going out for lunch and going clubbing. However, the focus of Cleary's research is not to explore the impact of Thai cultural identity on psychosocial adaptation, which is the focus in this study. Moreover, other research regarding Thai international PhD students focuses on construction and negotiation of their identities when living and studying in Australia (Nomnian, 2018; Nomnian, 2017b), and the investigation of Thai international PGT students' oral participation in their classrooms in the UK (Nomnian, 2008). Another study conducted by Kettle (2005) aims to explore academic experiences of a Thai international PGT student in their classrooms in Australia. Thus, there remains a lack of empirical evidence and conceptual exploration on how Thai cultural identity impacts on Thai international PhD students in terms of their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation while living and studying in the UK.

Empirical research has provided useful accounts of academic and social challenges encountered by Thai international students when they are studying abroad. Thus, the following section will present these issues.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Thai International Students during Their Studies Abroad

4.3.1 The Language Barrier and Unfamiliarity with Western Learning Approach

As English is a foreign language for Thai international students, this poses a challenge to them when they study abroad. The interview findings in Nomnian's (2018) study indicate that Thai international PhD students in Australia face challenges to understand Australian accents and they are confused about slang in their daily social interactions, e.g. when ordering food in English, 'arvo' and 'mozzies' which mean 'afternoon' and 'mosquitoes' respectively. In terms of

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dealing with academic challenges, the findings in a mixed-method study conducted by Cleary (2016) with Thai international postgraduate taught students in the UK indicate that participants face the challenges of fast-paced delivery by their lecturers in classrooms. Consequently, this can have an impact on their comprehension of the lesson. Concerning unfamiliarity with Western learning approach, a qualitative study was conducted by Kettle (2005) with a Thai PGT student to explore his learning experiences in a master's programme in Australia. The interview findings indicate that the participants face a challenge of oral participation in their classrooms in Australia. This challenge is possibly due to the lack of oral practice in his classroom in Thailand because Thai students tend to sit and listen to their teachers Kettle (2005). Cleary (2016) points out that lecturers in universities abroad notice that Thai international students are likely to be quiet and may feel embarrassed to participate or ask questions during classroom discussions. In Nomnian's (2008) qualitative study, the interview findings indicate a possible cause of silence in a classroom of Thai PGT students in the UK, i.e. large class size for a lecture. The large class size discourages Thai participants from oral participation as they may feel afraid of giving a lecturer a wrong answer, which can enable them to lose face in front of a large number of students. These aspects may originate from Thai teaching practice that focuses on one right answer (Promyod, 2013). Arguably the feeling of being afraid of losing face is likely to be associated with Thai cultural value. According to Nimanandh and Andrews (2009), face in Thai cultural value is similar to ego; thus, losing face may possibly lead to embarrassment – something that should be avoided. Moreover, some researchers point out that this may be generated from cultural traits in education and wider socio-cultural practices such as keeping silent in front of teachers as a mark of respect for teachers (Baker, 2008). This is because teachers may be regarded as authorities and the givers of knowledge whereas students may be considered to be inexperienced and unlikely to share or express ideas (Baker, 2008). Deveney (2005) adds that Thai students believe that teachers dedicate themselves to the good of the pupils, which in turn creates a moral debt among the students. Thus, questioning teachers or asking them to repeat an explanation may be considered as an expression of ingratitude and being highly inappropriate (Foley, 2005). Kettle and Luke (2013) add that Thai students tend to believe their teachers'

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ideas, which subsequently makes them unlikely to disagree with their teachers in classrooms. Interestingly, the nature of Thai students who tend to believe their teachers' ideas as pointed out by Kettle and Luke contradicts one of the Buddha's teachings based on Theravada Buddhism which is practised by 95% of the Thai people (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019) - the Kalama Sutta. This principle of Buddha's teaching states that we should not believe anything or anyone immediately without giving careful attention and full scrutiny, even though that person is our teacher (Mahidol University, 2002). Arguably, Thai students should not be passive, but should be able to examine what they are taught and decide on what to believe. According to Promyod's (2013) qualitative study, there is an attempt to implement an Argument- based Inquiry Approach (ABI) or the argumentative approach to promote Thai high school student's critical thinking skills in Thai science classrooms. This is because ABI can encourage students to develop their reasoning skills and problem-solving skills, which are regarded as important when they continue their studies in higher education. The findings of this study indicate that such teaching approaches are unlikely to be successful when it is used by some Thai teacher participants. This is because some participants lack the understanding of this teaching approach and the willingness to employ it in their classrooms. Consequently, some Thai teacher participants still adhere to teacher-directed learning without class discussions, thought-provoking activities and student-student interactions (Promyod, 2013). Thus, the findings of Promyod's study may imply that the teacher-centredness in Thai teaching and learning approaches minimises Thai students' opportunities to question their teachers or develop their critical thinking skills. Arguably, the challenges that Thai international PhD students face abroad, e.g. questioning their supervisors or asking for help from their supervisors may be impacted on by existing and highly valued Thai cultural values such as hierarchy. Research by Nomnian (2017a) indicates that it is also the case that the Western academic culture, which encourages questioning and critical thought may initially be unfamiliar and even alien to Thai students.

In addition to the language barrier and unfamiliarity with the Western learning approach, managing relationships with their supervisors during a PhD abroad is

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also highlighted in research. Thus, the following section will discuss this issue in detail.

4.3.2 Managing Relationships with Supervisors

The previous section illustrates that Thai students are likely to respect their teacher, which is encouraged from the earliest points in schooling. This cultural trait may have an influence on the relationships between Thai international PhD students and their supervisors abroad. Nomnian (2017a) conducts a qualitative interview study with Thai international PhD students in Australia. The findings indicate that Thai participants often preferred to keep silent when they do not have similar opinions with their supervisors, and they tend to be polite and considerate towards their supervisors. Some participants admit that it is quite difficult for them to overcome these Thai cultural values. However, as time progresses and some participants adapt their learning styles to suite their new learning environment, they are able to challenge their supervisors or have an open discussion with their supervisors (Nomnian, 2017a). Arguably, the relationships between supervisors and their Thai international PhD students may also depend on how supervisors treat their international PhD students. For example, if supervisors seem to be approachable and build a good relationship with students, this may enable Thai international PhD students to not see them as an authority figure but feel more equal and be on a friendly footing. Further, the supervisory relationship may also depend on how PhD students evaluate the level of their knowledge and academic experiences. For example, participants in this study can have disagreements with their supervisors in the UK when they give the supervisors reasons to support their ideas. Nomnian's study draws attention to the debate about the individuality of international students, and resistance to generalisations about national groups. Gu and Schweisfurth (2016) argue that focusing on the role of culture in international students should be treated with caution since it may regard Chinese international students, for example, as deviating from Western academic norms. Arguably, understanding the differences in culture may also help to avoid misinterpretation or over-simplification of international students' behaviour. For instance, according to Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li (2013), there may be different concepts of academic learning between the Western and the

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Eastern philosophical traditions of learning. Western philosophical learning is in many ways routed through the Athenian school of thought (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013) which focuses on critical debate and questioning regardless of the status or the authority of a person. This contrasts with East Asian learning which tends to value the virtue of endurance, perseverance and respect by students, and silence and introspection as a high level of thinking (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013).

In addition to the language barrier, unfamiliarity with Western learning approach and managing relationships with supervisors, living and studying in a new country can lead to a feeling of disorientation or culture shock. Thus, the following section will discuss this issue in detail.

4.3.3 Dealing with Culture Shock

Culture shock refers to individuals' experiences of losing familiar signs and symbols of social interaction of their own culture when they live in a different country (Oberg, 1960). Consequently, this can lead to a feeling of frustration and anxiety. Culture shock comprises four stages, i.e. 'honeymoon' stage (individuals are excited in the new setting), 'culture shock' stage (individuals feel confused or isolated in the host country), 'recovery' stage (stage when individuals understand and are open to the new cultural setting) and 'adjustment' stage (individuals accept custom of the host country) (Oberg, 1960, p.178-179). Culture shock has been employed in research on Thai international students' experiences of living and studying abroad. In Nomnian's (2018) qualitative study, the interview findings indicate that participants experienced culture shock during their period in Australia. For example, a participant feels shocked to see a grandchild putting his feet on his grandmother's face (Nomnian, 2018). This is regarded as inappropriate behaviour as feet are considered unclean and should not be used to point or touch another person, especially if the person is elderly as elderly people are respected in Thailand (Thomson, 2009). These examples arguably demonstrate cultural differences between Australia and Thailand as it is likely that Australian cultural value is less hierarchical than Thai cultural value. Nomnian's findings are also in

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accordance with the findings in this study as Thai participants see more equal relationships between younger and older people in the UK than in Thailand.

Considering the value of recognising cultural differences in learning and social interactions, it is necessary to understand what Thai cultural identity is. Thus, this issue will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 Cultural Identity

This section begins with the definition of cultural identity. Then attention will be paid to characteristics of Thai cultural identity and, finally, the focus will shift to the influence of Thai cultural identity on educational practices.

4.4.1 The Definition of cultural identity

In order to understand the meaning of cultural identity, it is necessary to explain the definition of the term culture. Culture, in its broadest sense can be defined as "the beliefs, way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society" (Pearson, 2014, p. 432). According to Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012), culture refers to patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols and meanings transmitted from one generation to the next and shared among group members. With regard to cultural identity, Liu, Volcic and Gallois (2011) define it as the sense of being a member of a larger cultural group that we socialise with and a system of symbols, values, norms, and traditions shared in the group. From the definitions of culture and cultural identity, we can recognise that cultural identity emphasises the notion of group membership and a sense of belonging which results from identifying with a specific cultural grouping/population within a group or society, which requires communication and interaction with each other (Hall, 1990). Cultural identity evolves and shapes over time within and between generations (Jameson, 2007). Additionally, culture and cultural identity are likely to be reflected in the lives of people in each society where informal and formal learning opportunties and wider socialisation are conveyed through norms and tradition. Vygotsky (1978) writes extensively on the role of primary and secondary socialisation. Primary socialisation takes place at

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home where the infant learns norms and values from their parents or whoever takes care of a child, while secondary socialisation occurs outside home or schools where social values are transmitted, e.g. from teachers to students, reinforcing these shared values. For example, children learn to speak their own language and copy an accent and dialect from their parents. They also learn to greet other people they meet depending on each culture, e.g. a handshake, cheek kissing and a bow. Then, in secondary socialisation, children learn new words taught by teachers. They also learn social norms at school, e.g. sharing toys with other friends (Vygotsky, 1978). Montgomery (2010) adds that when individuals move to a new cultural context, a new culture or a third culture is formed and developed through interaction with other people and new socio-cultural practices. Moreover, it is reported that individuals may perceive their cultural identity when they live in a different country whose cultural identity differs from theirs (Sussman, 2000). For example, they are taught by their parents to respect and be obedient to elderly people. However, this cultural belief sharply contrasts with the cultural belief of another country where equal relationships between younger and older people are important (Sussman, 2000). This implies that international students are likely to reflect and even deepen their understanding of their cultural identity when they live and study abroad as their cultural identity becomes more pronounced when compared to the host country's cultural identity. This area of enquiry requires further research.

As the focus of this study is the impact of Thai cultural identity on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK, it is necessary to discuss the characteristics of Thai cultural identity.

4.4.2 Distinct characteristics of Thai cultural identity

There are three main characteristics of Thai cultural identity that are likely to be relevant to this study (e.g. Knutson et al., 2002; Komin, 1991; Chaidaroon, 2003). First, Thais are likely to place a high value on social harmony and smooth interpersonal relationships (Knutson, 1994; Komin, 1991). This is seemingly confirmed in a quantitative study conducted by Komin who develops the Thai Value Survey to find out which values are prioritised the most by Thais. The survey was

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conducted in 1978 with Thai people from different geographical regions and various occupations and in 1981 with Thai people who lived exclusively in Bangkok. The survey was conducted in a different year to check the consistent patterns of value priorities in different times and across groups. The findings demonstrate that there is consistency of the value rankings of the two groups of participants and there are 9 values which are ranked according to the priority of importance. Among these 9 values, face-saving, avoiding criticising others and being considerate towards others are highly valued. These values can be conveyed by the Thai term', i.e. *"Namjai"* referring to real care, concern over others' feelings and helping others before being asked. Another example would be a Thai key value, i.e. the *Krengjai* attitude or diffidence, deference and consideration with respect towards someone else (Klausner, 2000). For example, Thai students may be reluctant to interrupt or disturb a teacher while the teacher is teaching and may prefer to ask their friends when they have questions about the lesson rather than asking the teacher (Khuvasanond, 2013). Krengjai can also be applied to a situation when a person may refrain from asking for help as doing so may cause an extra effort for another person to help, and the person who is asking for help will be considered thoughtless (Chaidaroon, 2003). These values clearly have important implications for the learning environments in which the Thai students may enter. Thai cultural value of 'social harmony' and hierarchy are interwoven and are reflected by the Thai word of Krengjai. Second, silence is generally considered as a major virtue in Thai society. This is confirmed by a quantitative study by Knutson, et al. (2002) who compared Willingness To Communicate (WTC), defined as the amount and frequency of communication. The findings demonstrate that the Thai respondents score lower on the WTC than the American respondents. This finding indicates that Thais are less likely to employ verbal communication and to value silence in comparison to their American peers. This may be due to the feeling of being afraid of inappropriate use of pronouns and relying on the relative status of the interlocutor. It is worth noting that in Thai language, there are 17 different forms of the first-person pronoun and 19 of the second person pronoun. Silence may be used as a means of avoiding conflict or embarrassment occurring due to inappropriate use of a pronoun (Knutson et al., 2002). It can be strongly argued that the use of different personal pronouns in Thai language also

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reflects a strict hierarchy in Thai society (Jianghua, 2018). To illustrate, the first person pronouns "/kraphom/" "/dichan/" or "/nu/" are used by younger speakers to elder or superior speakers to express their humility and respect while "/tha:n/", a second person pronoun, is used to speak to monks or to an interlocutor who has a high status (Jianghua, 2018). Silence can be employed as a mechanism to deal with difficulties or stressful life events, e.g. getting fired, divorce and major sickness. Thus, it is quite common to see Thai adults find sanctuary of Buddhism, e.g. being ordained for a period of time, reading Buddhist teaching and philosophy seriously, and practicing meditation, to re-create their psychological equilibrium before carrying on with their lives. The survey findings indicate that a portion of Thai people ranging from 75% to 84.5% agree with the statement that inner peace can be achieved by detaching themselves from desires and thirsts (Komin, 1991). Finally, Thai cultural identity strongly attaches importance to social hierarchy. This can be demonstrated by the concept of Karma which means accepting one's social status and accepting the status of the world around them (Foley, 2005). However, Klausner (2000) also contends that there may be a possible misconception about Karma as one can possibly change one's present state and condition by one's present acts, which can dictate both the present state and the future life. Arguably, if one believes that his or her destiny is predetermined by previous life or karma, one would be unable to develop oneself or to improve one's skills. The concept of Karma may fail to explain the increase in one's social status, i.e. moving from being poor to being rich. Thus, one's destiny is likely to depend on one's present doing. Indeed, Lord Buddha himself insists that a person is able to create his or her destiny or a person is the architect of one's own fate (Garfield, 2014).

This section discusses Thai cultural identity, which attaches importance to social harmony and social hierarchy. As Thai cultural identity is likely to be a national culture, it is likely to be relevant to Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures (see Chapter 3), which are used as an underpinning theory in this study. Thus, the following section will discuss the relevance of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures to Thai cultural identity in detail.

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4.5 Theoretical Framework

The following graph compares six cultural dimensions (see 3.2 Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures) of Thailand and the UK. This serves to demonstrate cultural differences between the two countries and the impact of these cultural differences on Thai international PhD students' adaptation when they live and study in the UK. The researcher created this figure based on information from Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010).
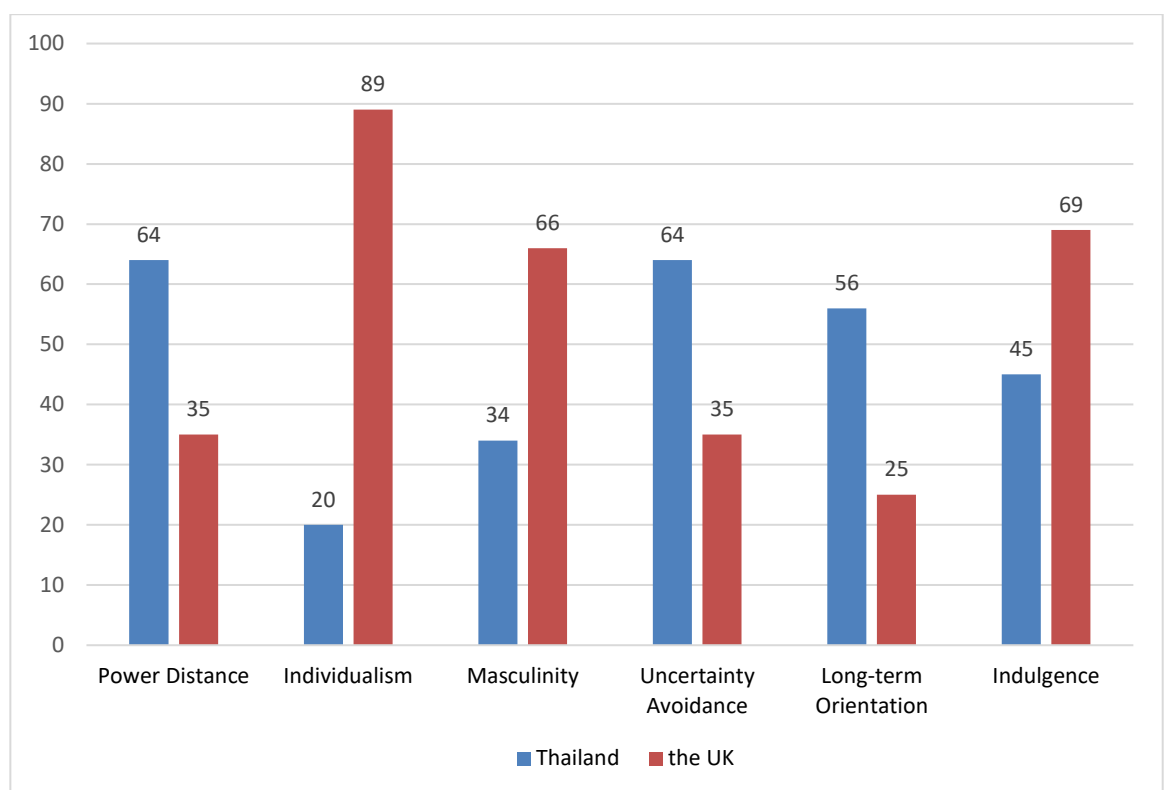
Figure 4.1 Six cultural dimensions of Thailand and the UK.

Regarding power distance, employees who were not managers of subsidiaries of IBM in 57 countries answered questions on their perception of and preference for their employers' decision-making style, e.g. an autocratic, a paternalistic or a consultative style. Then, the scores for these answers are calculated based on Hofstede's formula to receive index values ranging from about o for a small-power distance country to about 100 for a large power distance country (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). The findings indicate that Thailand scores 64 on Power Distance Index (PDI), whereas the UK receives 35 (Hofstede, Hofstede and

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Minkov, 2010). This finding indicates that within Thai society, inequalities of power are likely to be tolerated and accepted. For example, Thai students may be reluctant to ask their teachers questions because they tend to be afraid of being blamed by teachers who have already taught the lesson in the class. On the contrary, British people are prone to think that inequalities should be decreased and people of all social standing and status should be treated equally. Further, Thailand scores only 20 on individualism, while the UK has a much higher score of 89. This strongly suggests that Thai individuals are more likely than other surveyed nations to subscribe to 'collectivism'. This means that Thais are likely to attach importance to interdependence of relations and harmony with each other and highlight mutual dependent relationships, contrasting to the UK, which tends to focus more on individualism referring to lose ties between individuals and people taking care of themselves. Regarding Masculinity, with a score of 34, Thai individuals adopted and valued 'softer' approaches towards fostering individual and professional relationships. These softer approaches included low assertiveness and low scores for competitiveness. However, at 66, the UK strongly presents a Masculine society - underlying success and competition in people's life. Moreover, Thailand scores 64 on Uncertainty Avoidance, which may indicate that Thais may feel more stressed by ambiguous situations than British people whose country scores 35. Concerning Long Term Orientation, Thailand has a higher score of 56 whereas the UK's value is 25. This implies that Thais are prone to delay immediate gratification of their desire, but British people tend to focus on efforts that produce quick results. Finally, in terms of Indulgence versus Restraint, Thailand scores in the middle (45) which means that Thai society tends to suppress gratification of needs or desires whereas the UK scores 69 which may suggest that British society may be classified as Indulgent in which people were likely to enjoy life and have fun (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). In this study, only two national cultural dimensions are employed, i.e. power distance and individualism-collectivism, to demonstrate the role of Thai cultural identity in Thai international PhD students' adaptation to their lives and studies in the UK. Moreover, this study (Study 1) employs threshold concepts – a concept specific to doctoral education - in order to explain the difficulties that Thai international PhD students face during their doctoral studies. Lastly, this study draws upon transnationalism (Vertovec,

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1999; 2009) to point out the link with home culture and, at the same time, new, evolving links with other people in the UK and in particular, within the new learning and social contexts.

Although Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures in terms of power distance and individualism-collectivism are employed in this study, it is worth stressing that Hofstede's claims are broad and often far too general – lack of individual differences. Moreover, there are views against Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture (see 3.3 Criticism of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures). For example, Tarry (2011) argues that Thai society tends to have become more individualistic due to the impact of globalisation, which leads to the ideas of competitive and individualistic values of people in a collectivistic country. However, there are a number of Thai phrases that still appear to demonstrate that Thailand is prone to collectivistic ideas. For instance, there is a Thai concept called "Jong Tum Dee ta Ya Den Ja Pen Pai" (p.36), meaning that it is good to do the right things but do not stand out from others or a group as no one would like to see others stand out (Pimpa, 2012). Notably, Yukongdi (2010) points out that Thai society is likely to be hierarchical as Thais are likely to address another person who is older than them as "Pi" and "Nong" for someone who is younger – something that Thai people uniquely practise even within a romantic relationship. These words are specific pronouns representing age differences. These Thai concepts and terms demonstrate that collectivism and a large Power distance tend to prevail strongly in Thailand.

4.6 Study 1

This study aims to investigate the impact of Thai cultural identity on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students. The research questions are:

1. How do Thai international PhD students perceive their cultural identity as they live and study in the UK?

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(1.1) How does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity affect their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation?

(1.2) Does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity evolve as a result of living and studying abroad? If so, how? What are the contributory factors to this?

4.7 Method

This section starts by presenting an overview of the whole methodology and the process of the research in Section 4.7.1 before discussing Study 1 more specifically. Starting with Section 4.7.2, the research design, including the details of participants who took part in Study 1 will be discussed. Then materials used for data collection, procedures for data collection, data analysis and ethical reflection of Study 1 will follow. The section ends by presenting procedure and ethical reflection entailed by Study 1 to protect the rights of the researcher, participants and photo subjects.

4.7.1 An Overview of the Methodology and the Process of the Research

Despite not adopting a longitudinal research design, this whole body of work comprises two interlinked qualitative studies, Study 1 and Study 2 with different groups of participants. Study 1 aims to explore the adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK, and Study 2 sets out to examine the re-adaptation of Thai international PhD returnees upon their return to Thailand. Conducting these two Studies in sequence is intended as a way of strengthening the design of the overall research. First, the findings of Study 1 are expected to inform and orientate towards issues that need to be further investigated in Study 2. Although these two studies would be conducted separately, the distinct insights gained from Study 1 will be explored later in Study 2. Conducting research in this way is important as living and studying in the UK for several years implies that Thai international PhD students could have the opportunity to be exposed to a new culture in a long period of time. Consequently, this is likely to make them

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compare Thai cultural value with Western cultural value; no matter how little or how much the differences are, it may need them to change their behaviour that they get used to do when they live in Thailand so that they could be able to fit in the new setting. As a result, this is worth investigating further what happens to them when they return to Thailand which will be carried out in Study 2. Additionally, there are some research studies in the area of psychology that have a similar research design to the design adopted for this research. For example, a quantitative study conducted by Good, Rattan and Dweck (2012) aims to find out why women are under-represented in the study of mathematics and enter the mathematics-based professions. To achieve this aim, the researchers conducted three separate Studies in a sequence. In Study 1, Good, Rattan and Dweck started to conduct a scale to determine structure for a sense of belonging and then, in Study 2, they continued to investigate the relationships between a sense of belonging to math and students' intention to pursue math in the future. In Study 3, the researchers examined the role that stereotype played in women's sense of belonging to math community and women's willingness to pursue math in the future. In the same way, Good, Rattan and Dweck's overall research is similar to the research design for this study where the preliminary findings obtained from Study 1 are intended to inform further examination of specific areas in Study 2. Some may argue that such research designs could lead to fragmented or disconnected studies and may not complement each other well. On the contrary, conducting studies in sequence is a good research design, i.e. the design enables establishing connections between separate studies, which is similar to connecting the dots – seeing the bigger picture. In the same way, this research design can offer the researcher the opportunity to see the two different but connected phenomena being investigated in a more holistic manner. By synthesising the findings of Study 1 and Study 2, it can lead to contribution to knowledge as the findings gained from these two studies could provide new insights into the whole journey of Thai international PhD students since they live and study in the UK and then eventually return to Thailand. Therefore, conducting Studies in sequence offers strength to a research design as the findings of Study 1 can lead to issues that need to be further explored in Study 2 and this helps the researcher see the whole picture of the investigation and such research design can better lead to

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greater insights into the existing knowledge in the area of international students. However, some may argue that a longitudinal study, which includes (a) research in which data are collected several times (b) data that are possibly collected at different periods of time and (c) data analysis concerning changes over time of the same individuals (Menard, 2004), could be more appropriate for this overall research. Although that may be true, a longitudinal study is not appropriate for this research. This is because a longitudinal study itself is likely to be more challenging to implement, i.e. potential participants may agree to take part in research and give data at one or more periods of time but may decide not to participate at a later time (Menard, 2004). In the context of this study, this is likely to occur where Thai international PhD students participate in the research when they are in the UK, but are less likely to do so upon returning to Thailand once they start having a busy work schedule as university lecturers, for example. Moreover, the researcher was unable to conduct a longitudinal study as it would require more than four years to investigate this issue. The researcher received a four-year-scholarship and the length of the full-time PhD programme at the University of Glasgow lasts for a maximum of four years. Therefore, financial and time limitations make it impossible to conduct a longitudinal study. However, not being able to conduct a longitudinal study is not regarded as a limitation of this research since the study design managed to obtain the insights required to address all the research questions for both studies. Instead, a longitudinal design is given as a recommendation for future research (see 6.5 Recommendations for Further Research). Regarding the disadvantage of conducting Studies in sequence, submitting an ethics application twice for each Study could delay the data collection of Study 2 with the researcher waiting for two sets of ethics approval. Nevertheless, applying for ethics approval is also of benefit to the researcher as it helped with the planning concerning the research procedures before commencing data collection for Study 2, e.g. recruitment of participants, data analysis, confidentiality and data handling. Considering the reasons previously given, conducting two studies in sequence is considered as an appropriate research design for this research since Study 2 was informed and oriented towards issues highlighted in Study 1. Together, these two studies facilitated filling a gap

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in the existing literature that focuses heavily on international students in the host country.

4.7.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore in-depth the role of Thai cultural identity on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK. The data collection included employing the photo-elicitation technique in the interviews. The study employed purposive sampling which depended on the judgement of the researcher to select the members of population to be studied (Battaglia, 2011). An attempt was made to consider homogeneity in terms of being born and raised in Thailand and having similar levels of academic study, i.e. a doctoral level in Scotland. Data were analysed using Thematic Analysis.

4.7.3 Participants

The researcher invited Thai international PhD students who were undertaking a PhD in two Scottish universities when this study was conducted. Participants were recruited via existing social and professional networks with a large number of the target Thai student participants studying in one of Scotland's universities, i.e. the Facebook site for Glasgow Thai Students Community. Recruiting participants from the Facebook site yielded benefits since it was not costly and enabled participants to ask other friends to participate in the study, a method which is also called snowball sampling (Kosinski, et al., 2016). According to Vogt (1999), snowball sampling is defined as a technique for finding research participants where one subject identifies others from among their acquaintances and those who are identified continue to identify other subjects, and so on. The Facebook site for Glasgow Thai Students Community was set up in July 2011 for former and present Thai students in all academic years in Glasgow to share their experiences, support each other and organise events to get together. Before posting invitations on the website, the researcher got permission from the webpage administrator. Recruited participants were 15 Thai international PhD students of varying ages, fields of study and lengths of study. Among them, 13 participants had won a

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scholarship from the Thai government; one participant had a scholarship from a private university and one participant was self-funded. Ten out of these 15 participants had previously completed a postgraduate Master's degree in the UK. Participant profile is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Participants' profile (n = 15).

Pseudonym	Gender	Age starting PhD	Year	College
Baifern	Female	26-30	3rd	Arts
Phan	Male	25 and younger	1st	Arts
Nid	Female	31-35	3rd	Arts
Orn	Female	31-35	2nd	Business School
Tor	Male	31-35	3rd	MVLS[a]
Nong	Female	36-40	4th	MVLS
Faahsai	Female	31-35	3rd	MVLS
Tonkhao	Female	31-35	3rd	MVLS
Nan	Female	31-35	1st	MVLS
Klang	Male	31-35	1st	MVLS
Tawan	Male	31-35	2nd	Science
Toei	Female	26-30	2nd	Science
Manao	Female	31-35	3rd	Science
Jum	Female	31-35	4th	Science and Engineering
Gao	Male	31-35	2nd	Science and Engineering

[a]Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences

Concerning participants' decisions to study for a PhD in the UK, there are various reasons, and participants have more than one reason for deciding to study for a PhD. Of fifteen participants, ten participants chose to study for a PhD in the UK because they would like to gain expert knowledge in their academic areas. For those who serve as university lecturers in Thailand, it is often a requirement of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) to get a PhD qualification in order to take responsibility for the PhD curriculum; for this group, this is typically one of the main reasons behind participants' decisions. It could also be a

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condition of the sponsor who offers a scholarship to Bachelor's degree holders, i.e. that they pursue a Master's degree and then continue to study for a PhD (World Scholarship Forum, 2018) Winning this type of scholarship implies that the scholar will be offered a position to work in academia after getting a PhD. In this study, there is one participant who received this type of offer, which, in turn, gives him an opportunity to get a job after his graduation. Another participant pursued a PhD, granted by a Scottish university, because the sponsor offers financial assistance to develop an additional skill, i.e. developing computer skills to model drug delivery. This participant used to work as a research assistant for her Master's degree's supervisor. Her supervisor got funding from a technology company to develop a new drug formula with the assistance of computer technology to model drug delivery. The scholarships were available to British and international students. This shows that the research topic of this participant may be directed by the objective of the technology company to devise a new drug formula rather than the participant's interest because her supervisor's research project was funded by a grant from that company. Other decisions to study for a PhD in the UK reflect the lack of personnel from the home country who specialise in a particular area. Another participant decided to study for a PhD in order to disseminate her research findings, whereas another participant who had already achieved her career goal when she worked in a company, saw gaining a doctoral degree as an opportunity to work in an academic area prompting her subsequent decision. Finally, other decisions include building up a network of professional contacts and the attraction of potential increase in salary after graduation. Arguably, as fourteen out of fifteen participants got scholarships to study for a PhD, this could add an additional layer of pressure for them to finish a PhD by the end date specified in the award contract. The length of the sponsorship relates to the length of a Tier 4 student visa since international students are required to submit an official financial sponsor's letter of confirmation of the length of the sponsorship (UK Visas & Immigration, 2016).

4.7.4 Materials

This study used tape-recorders for recording the interviews and employed NVivo software to help analyse the qualitative data. In this process, the researcher also

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utilised Express Scribe and Foot Pedal Controls to facilitate verbatim transcription of interview data.

4.7.5 Procedure

In this study, ethical approval was granted by the ethical committee of College of Social Sciences of the University of Glasgow (see Appendix 11). Before commencing the main study, a pilot interview was carried out with a Thai international PhD student who was not included in the main study but shared similar characteristics with the main study participants (Fox, 2006), i.e. Thai international PhD students who registered in a PhD programme in one of the Scottish universities. As reported by Kvale (2007) and Bryman (2012), conducting a pilot interview has guided researchers into adjusting the wording instructions or confusing phrases used in the interview questions, which, in turn, facilitated a more focused and clearer set of interview questions. The pilot participant was a second year Thai PhD student who had won a scholarship from a Thai Ministry. The process of the pilot interview was similar to the process of the main study. The researcher sent Plain Language Statement (see Appendix 1), Plain Language Statement for photo subjects (see Appendix 3), consent form (see Appendix 5), consent form for photo subjects (see Appendix 7) and instructions for taking or selecting photographs (see Appendix 9) to the pilot participant via Facebook Messenger. Then, the pilot participant was asked to send her selected photographs to the researcher before the day of the interview so that the researcher could check the clarity and understandability of these documents. For example, the signature of photo subjects on the consent form was required if the pilot participant took photographs where people are recognisable. The pilot participant did not take photographs where people are recognisable; thus, there were not any consent forms for photo subjects. In the pilot interview, the pilot participant suggested that the definition of cultural identity should be provided before the request for selecting a photograph that represented distinct Thai cultural identity. Further, the words 'Thai cultural weaknesses' was quite unclear. The pilot participant suggested replacing the words 'Thai cultural weakness' with 'things that Thai people don't like'. Further, the words 'study habits' were subsequently deleted for the main study as the pilot participant did not get accustomed to these

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words. In prompts, it was suggested to provide an example of 'non-Asians' to clarify the meaning of this word. Therefore, the pilot interview was used for reordering the definition of cultural identity, rephrasing some words that were unclear, providing more details or explanations of some words in the interview questions and revising the interview questions (see Appendix 13 for the original version and the revised version of the interview questions). Then the researcher sent all the documents related to the study to participants at least two days before the day of the interview. These documents included similar documents that the researcher had already sent to the pilot participant. Concerning the use of photographs in this study, participants were informed about asking the permission of photo subjects if they take photographs where people were recognisable. In this study, three participants selected a photograph where the faces could be identified, and one participant selected a photograph in which the face of her friend was revealed. Thus, they were asked to sign the consent form for photo subjects. After being informed about the ethical use of photographs for research purposes, participants were asked to send their photographs via Facebook Messenger at least one day before the day of the interview in order to check whether the practice of taking or selecting photographs complied with the ethical use of visual images. To store the selected photographs of participants, the photographs were kept on the secure OneDrive located within My Campus on the University server; the photographs were stored in individual folders where names were anonymised. Then the researcher deleted participants' photographs on Facebook Messenger. On the day of the interview, the researcher restated the aims of this study and assured anonymity and confidentiality of data to participants before the interview started. There was no further question asked by participants before they signed their names on the consent form. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants the interview questions and showed the selected photograph to each participant to remind them of their photographs. Each individual interview took approximately 30 to 40 minutes and a maximum of one hour. The interview was conducted in Thai so that participants did not worry about the use of their English, e.g. making a grammatical error or limited English vocabularies, when they provided their accounts. Using the participants' (and the researcher's) first language also assisted a more

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transparent, more engaging and a more open conversation leading to better quality of interview data (Welch and Piekkari, 2006). The interview was audio-recorded to help capture accurately participants' ideas. Interviews were conducted in a quiet and private place on campus, e.g. in a café, which was convenient for both participants and the researcher. Public places were chosen to record the interview to help ensure the personal safety of the researcher and participants. When the interviews were complete, transcripts were returned to participants for validation purposes (Hagens, Dobrow and Chafe, 2009). While conducting an interview, the points that needed clarification by participants were noted down so that participants could be asked to elaborate their answers further. This framing of questions is called probes, which refer to questions that the interviewer asks the interviewee in order to provide more details of their responses which lead to richness and depth of responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Additionally, a reflexive diary was also used for the researcher's written reflections when collecting data and data analysis were carried out. According to Bloor and Wood (2006), a reflexive diary refers to the researcher's notes of their activities, ideas and feelings throughout the research process starting from design to presenting the findings. Nadin and Cassell (2006) advocate the use of a reflexive diary as a useful tool to inform researchers about a variety of methodological and theoretical decisions in terms of the research. In this study, the researcher's feelings or reactions to participants' accounts, ideas to remember, main findings, personal opinions about participants' accounts and potential theoretical frameworks were written in the reflexive diary so that these points could be included in the result section (see 1.1 Hierarchy, 3.2 Listening and speaking skills, 4.1 Friendships with both Thai friends and international friends). For example, the researcher noted that Hofstede's national cultural dimensions may be a potential theoretical framework of this study as the aspect of social hierarchy comes out as a distinct aspect during the interview. Another example is when the researcher noted that a participant may feel inferior to a Western lecturer who gave a lecture on Chinese history in English though this subject is in Asian context, contrasting to the participant who may not perform well as English is not his native language.

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4.7.6 Data Analysis

The study employed one-to-one semi-structured research interviews supplemented with the use of participatory methods, specifically the use of photo-elicitation. The researcher followed a Thematic Analysis inductive approach for the interview data, a process of coding data without researchers' preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is, thus, data-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To increase the researcher's familiarisation with data, transcripts were read several times and NVivo 10 was used to support initial highlighting of interesting passages and words contained in the transcripts. Data were analysed by following the six phases of Thematic Analysis proposed by Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015). The entire transcripts were read at least twice to be familiar with the data, and initial coding (in NVivo) was used to identify and label important features of the data in relation to the research questions. These could be 'respect for the older person', 'lack of wide range of English vocabularies' and 'cooking Thai food with Thai friends.' The next phase included developing themes by grouping similar themes together and reviewing themes by checking whether the theme matched the meaning in the coded data and the data itself. For example, one data extract was 'We respect our grandparents, our older colleagues' and another data extract was 'I don't dare to have equal relationships with [with Thai elderly people].' The code of these data extracts was 'respect for the older person' and the theme was 'hierarchy.' The next phase was then followed by defining and naming themes and the final phase was concerned with writing up the report. Themes and quotes were determined by combining several factors, i.e. extensiveness - a quote theme was repeatedly mentioned by different participants, the frequency - a quote was discussed by participants frequently, specificity of quotes - quotes that were specific and gave details, and themes that expressed participants' emotion, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity (Krueger and Casey, 2000). For example, a quote of a participant who climbed a mountain with an elderly couple reflected specificity as the participant gave details of how she was treated equally regardless of age, which may differ from the interaction with a Thai elderly couple. Thus, the researcher selected extracts of data from this participant as they were specific and had details. Another example was when a participant

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illustrated the difficulties of speaking in English by comparing a lecture on Chinese history delivered by a native English speaker and a situation if he had to do the same thing. His account implies his feeling of inferiority as he may not deliver a lecture as good as the native speaker. Though it was only one participant who raised this issue, the researcher selected his data extracts since they reflected emotion of the participant. Simultaneously, photographs that corresponded with quotes were identified to enrich and validate themes and subthemes. In the list of themes presented in Table 4.2, it can be noted how the final themes were determined. There were four main themes in this study - 1) Thai cultural identity, 2) doctoral identity, 3) academic challenges and 4) social relationships.

4.7.7 Ethical Reflection

The researcher carefully followed the research protocol in relation to participants' voluntary participation, avoidance of harm, anonymity and participants' consent and photo subjects' identity, extent of the use of visual data and data storage (Wiles, Clark, and Prosser, 2011). Additionally, participants could take photographs in public and private spaces, where they had permission to do so. However, they were asked not to take photographs of items categorised as artistic works, e.g. paintings, cartoons, sketches, photographs and moving images such as films. Furthermore, participants were advised to avoid taking pictures of individuals where identify could be ascertained. Instead they could depict an individual through more abstract means such as focusing on a body part, e.g. a pair of hands or feet, or photos taken in such a way that the identity of the photo subject was concealed, e.g. a photo taken from the back or a photo taken from a great distance.

As the researcher is also a Thai international PhD student and a member of the Facebook site for Glasgow Thai Students Community, the researcher knew some participants before starting this study. Consequently, this gave the researcher an advantage to recruit participants and establish trust with them. However, since the researcher knew some participants before commencing this study, the participants could refuse to take part in this study. This practice is highly regarded

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as important for the interviewer so that participants can feel comfortable to share their personal experiences (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Therefore, they were likely to feel comfortable to discuss openly some of the issues related to the challenges they faced during their PhD, and some challenges were quite similar to those of the researcher. At the same time, knowledge of the participants can also pose a challenge to the researcher as some information was quite personal, which could consequently make the researcher keep on reflecting on the information acquired. Additionally, being born and having lived in Thailand for more than twenty years, the researcher understands how Thai cultural values impact her life and doctoral studies in the UK. Based on these reasons, the researcher believes that her personal insights will help enrich the overall conduct of this study and will bring a unique perspective to the interpretations of the findings.

In the following section, the researcher will discuss the results of the study. It starts from demonstrating a structure of themes and subthemes, background of participants and finishes by presenting results of the study.

4.8 Results

To address the research questions, the study aimed to explore Thai international PhD students' perceptions of Thai cultural identity and how this influences their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation. Likewise, the study investigated the participants' evolved sense of Thai cultural identity as a result of living and studying abroad. The resultant themes from the transcripts were generated from the interviews in connection with the research foci – participants' perception of Thai cultural identity and its impact on their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation, as well as their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity while studying in the UK. Verbatim quotes were used to evidence these themes; the themes are connected with the research questions, which were set out. There are four main themes (see Table 4.2 below), in this study – 1) Thai cultural identity, 2) doctoral identity, 3) academic challenges and 4) social relationships. The Thai cultural identity theme - including hierarchy and Buddhist practices as a way of life emerged as a distinct aspect in relation to the

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participants' academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation - and are discussed first.

As the aim of the participants who come to the UK is to pursue a PhD, all of the following themes tend to represent both Thai cultural identity and doctoral identity (Themes 1 and 2) and academic challenges (Theme 3) faced by participants during their doctoral studies. These themes are crucial in understanding their endeavour to adapt to Western academic and learning conventions as they are in the context where it is the Western universities who make the rules and use specific criteria for measuring the quality of PhD students' academic work. Therefore, participants are required to meet the requirements to finish a PhD. Social relationships (Theme 4) with groups of both Thai friends and international friends are also explored to examine in-depth the nature and quality of their social relationships as it is significantly related to their adaptation to studying in the UK. This societal aspect is important to demonstrate their co-national friends' emotional support and participants' opportunities to learn about new cultures during their interaction with other international friends. The results indicated that hierarchy is the salient sub-theme in the main theme of Thai cultural identity, which implies that hierarchy is likely to have an impact on participants' relationships with their supervisors. This is because some participants regarded their supervisors in a similar way to regarding their Thai teachers, i.e. someone in authority. Further, the sub-themes Buddhist practices and friendships with Thai friends reflect ideas from collectivism which can have an impact on their classroom participation and enable them to get emotional support from other Thai international PhD friends. These four themes characterise the key issues of Thai participants' adaptation in the UK.

Table 4.2 The themes and sub-themes

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Themes			
Thai Cultural Identity	Doctoral Identity	Academic Challenges	Social Relationships
Sub-themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes
1.1 Hierarchy Respecting older people and its impact on academic acculturation in the UK	*2.1 The focus on self-direction* Becoming an independent learner	*3.1 Academic writing* The attempt to conform to British academic conventions	*4.1 Friendships with both Thai friends and international friends* Thai friends' emotional and academic support, and opportunities to learn about different cultures
Sub-themes		Sub-themes	Sub-themes
1.2 Buddhist practices The state of silence as a mechanism to deal with challenges		*3.2 Listening and speaking Skills* Lack of fluency and deciphering accents	*4.2 Different forms of exchanges of greetings* Being unaccustomed to hug or kiss on cheeks
		3.3 Different academic cultures Verbal participation and relaxed manner of Western researchers	

When participants come to the UK, Thai international PhD students are expected to deal with cultural differences between Thai and British cultures. Hence, the following section will present the characteristics of Thai cultural identity that have significant impacts on their lives during the transition process.

1. Thai cultural identity

1.1 Hierarchy- cultural value of status and respect

As noted in the reflexive diary, one of the distinct characteristics of Thai cultural identity that connects with issues related to learning contexts specific to PhD study is the high regard placed on the cultural value of status and respect. Thai

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hierarchical societal structure can be seen when a younger Thai address an older Thai person by adding 'Pee' before one's name to show respect for the older person; this practice is extended even among couples or romantic partners. Another example includes a daily gesture called 'Wai' by placing the palms of the hands together with fingers extended at face level - again initiated by the younger person to convey respect. In this connection, there are different levels of position of the joined hands depending on degrees of respect - the higher the fingertips are placed on one's head, the more respect is shown. This distinct characteristic of Thai cultural identity is demonstrated further in the photograph below.

Figure 4.2 Thai cultural identity (Orn)

The above photograph was selected by Orn showing a garland of flowers typically given by Thais to those whom they respect, based on age, e.g. older colleagues and grandparents. Orn explains the influence of hierarchy below:

> *I think that Thai culture takes the concept of status and respect into account. A garland of flowers is like a symbol of respect. We respect our grandparents, our older colleagues ... We give the seat on the bus to those who are older to show respect for them. This is our way of*

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respecting [those who are older]. (Orn, Female, 2nd year, Lines 56 – 62)

Orn's quote strongly indicates that Thai cultural value of status and respect is likely to have an impact on the relationships between Thai international PhD students and their supervisors in terms of respecting the supervisors as an authority. Consequently, deference to authority may prevent them from openly disagreeing with the supervisor or refusing a request from the supervisor even though the request would be unrealistic, e.g. an impossible deadline to meet, overtime work. This aspect of Thai cultural value implies that Thai students would not get accustomed to questioning their teachers since this practice is regarded as challenging an authority (Baker, 2008), and is therefore, not encouraged. Back home, Thai students are discouraged from asking their Thai teachers questions since this practice is thought to cause the teachers to 'lose face' if they are unable to answer students' questions. The impact of the Thai cultural notion of 'status and respect' for academic learning is likely to present a challenge to this international cohort when pursuing a PhD in the UK where its learning environment attaches greater importance to reflecting on, analysing, and even questioning the ideas of academics in general, including their own supervisors. Similarly, Nong selected a photograph of a garland of flowers she brought from Thailand during a visit and gave to her supervisor. Such practice shows that participants tend to cling to Thai norms and apply this idea even when they are now situated in a different cultural context. Like Orn and Nong, Thai cultural value of 'status and respect' is reinforced by Tor in the context of supervision. Tor checked his understanding of his supervision meeting by writing a list of the points of the discussion to make sure that he and his supervisors shared a similar understanding of the meeting, to double check that he *'would do the same thing'*. This is an indication where Thai students tend to align to their supervisors' thinking as another demonstration of valuing 'status and respect'. Tor's statement implies that Thai cultural practice of highly respecting teachers and educators is likely to inform and have an impact on his life in the UK - respecting his Western supervisors in a similar way to respecting his Thai teachers. Living in a foreign country also leads to exposure to a different perspective in relation to this Thai cultural value.

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For example, Faahsai's experience made her reflect on the notion of respect when she met two elderly people during her hillwalking trip in the UK (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 More 'equal' relationships (Faahsai)

They don't treat me as though I'm younger than them.... There is no generation gap. If they were Thais, ... I would sit on the floor... take care of them. I would be considerate towards them. I don't dare to have equal relationships with [with Thai elderly people]... (Faahsai, Female, 3rd year, Lines 397- 402)

In Faahsai's account, she stresses the importance of hierarchy in Thai cultural values, contrasting with Western cultural values, which take the concept of equality into account. The interaction with this elderly couple also reflects Faahsai's link with local people, which enables her to see different cultural practice as the relationships between younger and older people are more equal when compared to younger Thais' relationships with elderly Thais. This has great implications even for the relationship with supervisors. Faahsai's account illustrates that the Western cultural values encourage PhD students to discuss their research projects with their supervisors in such a way as if they have equal status. This means that they could have a disagreement with their supervisors about any components of the research, which can then further develop their thinking skills, generate critical thinking, and even lead to a friendly debate.

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Faahsai's encounter with these cultural differences implies that her experience in the new setting has enabled her to change her perception of hierarchy or renegotiate her Thai cultural identity as part of living in a new cultural context. In the new, i.e. Western cultural and academic context, doctoral students and their supervisors have equal status. In this connection, it means that doctoral students do not need to preserve the public self-image (or face) of their supervisors. They can express their opinions, even when they are dissimilar to their supervisors. This, in turn, leads to forming a habit of debate, a challenging attitude, the development of critical thinking skills and independent learning disposition among PhD students. Furthermore, living abroad for some time can lead to the evolved sense of Thai cultural value of status and respect. Two participants, Tonkhao and Manao, openly expressed their opinions, which are dissimilar to their supervisors in the UK. The following quotes from Manao showed an uncommon practice among Thai PhD students who prefer not to discuss the issue directly and openly with their supervisors.

> *I didn't discuss the issue [didn't have disagreements] with my Thai supervisor in a Master's degree... I couldn't discuss the issue directly [argue] with my Thai supervisor but I can do it here [in the UK]. I can speak [have disagreements] with my supervisor [in the UK] by giving him a reason ... (Lines 287 – 290) If I have a reason [If my decisions are reasonable], he will accept [my decision] ...* (Manao, Female, 3rd year, Lines 305 – 306)

Manao's account highlights the contrast between the culturally influenced orientations of learning in the UK and Thailand Higher Education Institution (HEI). British learning styles endorse a critical debate and enable students to challenge academics - a practice which rarely occurs in Thai teaching and learning context. Moreover, the fact that Manao's supervisor accepted her decision to buy a scientific substance to use when she carried out an experiment implies that the maintenance of saving face is not of primary importance in Western academic culture. This contrasts with the Thai teaching and learning context, which attaches great importance not only to 'status and respect' but also to the notion of 'saving face'. Whereas discussing issues directly and openly with Thai academics

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can at times convey disrespect or be perceived to be a challenge to their authority and credibility, this is something that is highly encouraged in British academic culture.

In addition to hierarchy, practicing Buddhism in the UK also comes out as another distinct characteristic of Thai cultural identity. Thus, the following analysis will discuss this issue in detail.

1.2 Buddhist practices as a way of life

The following photograph from Tonkhao shows how Thais living abroad congregated to make merit at Kathina festival in a city in Scotland.

Figure 4.4 A Buddhist festival (Tonkhao)

Kathina festival is a time for Buddhists to give monks new yellow robes and subsequently make a donation after the monks have spent time studying the teachings of the Lord Buddha and teaching the doctrine to the lay community. Participants' attending this Thai religious festival may demonstrate their links with Thailand or the links between people and places across nations. In this case, it demonstrated the link between participants who lived and studied in the UK and Thailand through their participation in Kathina festival. This is illustrated by Toei.

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I'm Buddhist so it was good to attend this festival. ... It reminded me of festivals and culture of our home country (Lines 262 – 264). *I rarely attended Kathina festival when I was in Thailand* (Line 266). *But there were not so many religious festivals here* [that's why I decided to attended Kathina festival in the UK] (Toei, Female, 2nd year, Line 270).

Toei's account implies that Kathina festival reminded her of Buddhist practice that she used to attend when she was in Thailand. This religious practice may reflect transnational practices of Thais who live and/or study abroad, i.e. both Thai international students and Thais who work or live in the UK. Further, the fact that participants attended this festival when they lived abroad demonstrates an aspect of their Thai cultural identity, i.e. hierarchy. Attending this festival can be related to the Buddhist doctrine, which attaches importance to making merit. Making merit embodies doing 'good things' or making merit as mentioned in the Buddhist doctrine, e.g. giving alms and food to monks and going to temples in Buddhist ceremonies on holy days. It is believed that the more individuals make merit, the more they may achieve good Karma, which may enable them to have happiness, prosperity and wealth when they are reincarnated. Thus, Kathina festival may enable Thais to accumulate their good Karma. Interestingly, an attempt to accumulate good Karma may have an impact on the way that Thai students behave towards their teachers as they are likely to respect what teachers say and unlikely to challenge or question their teachers openly (Nguyen, 2005). Questioning teachers is perceived as a sign of ingratitude and inappropriate behaviour towards teachers. This explains why asking teachers questions in the classroom is not common practice for Thai students. This aspect of Thai culture, demonstrated through such festivals as Kathina, can have a crucial impact on participants' academic practice in the UK as participants may cling to the value of behaving well in their classroom abroad, i.e. respecting teachers and reservation about debate or discussion in class, which differs from the core of Western teaching and learning, i.e. questioning the ideas of others and debating. Another example showing collectivism of Thai cultural identity is Jum's case of expressing a social bond with a Buddhist laywoman who gives Jum something to eat when she

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goes to the temple. The following verbatim quotes of Jum indicate that generosity of giving food to a stranger is typical among Thais.

> *When I go to the temple, the Buddhist laywoman cooks food for me … This is the characteristic of Thais … Whenever I go there or whenever I feel hungry and if there is someone there [at the temple], that person can give me food … I feel that it [the temple] is my home and it [creates] a deep bond …* (Jum, Female, 4th year, Lines 291 – 295)

Jum's account demonstrates that Thai culture is underpinned through the ideals of collectivistic ideology as evidenced by the Buddhist laywoman taking care of her. Laywoman is defined as a disciple of the Buddha who is not ordained as a nun and is responsible for preparing and giving food to monks (Andrews, 2019). This practice where a member of a group takes responsibility for looking after another person in the group is arguably highly collectivistic by nature. This cultural aspect can again have an impact on the character traits of Thais as they would show kindness even to strangers and avoid criticising others' opinions or debate with them in order to preserve harmony. To apply Jum's case to this study, participants find criticising their teachers or supervisors' opinions incongruent with their cultural norms since such practice would threaten group harmony. Jum's case correlates with the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance proposed by Festinger (1957) which posits that individuals will change or moderate their own beliefs and attitudes when discrepancy occurs between what they know or believe and what they do. For Thai participants, they have the belief that criticising or having a disagreement with their supervisors would break their cultural norms. However, they are required to behave in the way consistent with Western cultural norms. Additionally, Buddhist practice not only shows the idea of collectivism but also places emphasis on states of silence, particularly in relation to meditation. Nid stated that she meditates '*in order to let go of attachment and focus on her duty and responsibility.*' Jum also stated that Buddhism is a higher level of thinking as it concerns meditation and letting go of attachment. The following photograph from Jum represents how meditation, as a main Buddhist practice, can affect Thai students' general attitudes and behaviour, including their behaviour as learners.

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Figure 4.5 Meditation - another level of thinking (Jum**)**

Buddhism is about dwelling in the present moment, meditation, intellect, solving problems and letting go of attachment. It is a higher level of thinking ... (Lines 259 – 260) *For me, it is about calmness in my heart ...* (Jum, Female, 4th year, Lines 268 – 269)

Similarly, discussing the Dharma, or "the Buddha's teachings" with monks at the Thai temple in Edinburgh made Nan feel calm when she had to deal with personal problems.

...when we feel unhappy and stressed, we go to a temple because it serves as our spiritual anchor. When we have problems [with] our studies, we will have a conversation with monks, which really makes us feel better, calm and find solutions. (Nan, Female 1st year, Lines 280 – 282)

Nid, Jum and Nan's accounts point out that Buddhist practice stresses the importance of quietness and calmness in terms of thinking through meditation, which does not require interpersonal communication. This implies that quietness and calmness can have an impact on participants' approach to learning, which emphasises the state of quietness and calmness. This practice stands in sharp contrast to the emphasis of Western teaching and learning on discussion and debates. In Western culture, being quiet can be interpreted as submissive or passive instead of considering this behaviour to be cooperative, not making others lose face. Thus, attaching to states of silence may be employed by Thai students as a mechanism to deal with both personal problems and to support higher levels

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of thinking. The following analysis will discuss issues related to doctoral study, i.e. the distinct characteristics of a PhD as perceived by the participants and academic challenges encountered during their studies.

2. Doctoral Identity

2.1 The focus on self-direction – a new learning orientation

As the previous theme of Thai cultural identity demonstrates, a respect for hierarchy comes out as one of the main characteristics of Thai cultural identity. This is highly relevant as the students build relationships and learn from their academic supervisors based on the traditional apprenticeship model (Walsh, 2010; Wright, 2003). Participants illustrated that Thai teachers are conventionally regarded as the '*givers of knowledge*' (Tawan), while students are viewed as being inexperienced and are unlikely or unable to share or express ideas. Additionally, participants explained that Thai students are perceived to lack the skills to acquire or seek knowledge by themselves (Klang, Tawan, Nong, Baifern and Toei) as they were taught to memorise the lesson, which characterises '*passive learning*' (Nong) and '*spoon-feeding*' (Klang). Hence, the learning experience in Thailand is quite contrary to learning in the UK as explicitly pointed out by Tawan:

> *… Thai lecturers were givers of knowledge. We just went to lectures and then we took examinations. But here, we are asked to think a lot and prepare [reading] before going to a lecture… my supervisor asked me to do this, but he didn't teach me how to do it. It is me who have to search for information and carry out an experiment… In Thailand, I would be told what steps to take.* (Tawan, Male, 2nd year, Lines 127 – 132)

Tawan's account echoes the fact that Thai educational systems rely heavily on teachers which provide students with rare opportunities to learn by themselves, contrasting with British educational systems which encourage students to be more independent, self-directed and self-regulated. These experiential accounts provided by the participants demonstrate this view of 'teacher-centredness' in Thai teaching and learning approaches, which is also relevant to the attitude

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towards respecting teachers since the approaches minimise students' opportunities to question teachers or express a different opinion. As illustrated by Tawan, self-regulation intensified when he decided to undertake a PhD in the UK since he had to learn and plan his study by himself. The participants acknowledged and stressed the importance of self-directed study habits as one of the crucial requirements for studying for a PhD. One participant, Manao, had no expectation of the self-directed study habits before commencing her PhD. In this study, participants did not directly use the word 'self-directed'. They used the word 'relying on themselves' and 'solving problems by themselves' to explain the characteristic of studying for a PhD. The word 'self-direction' has broader meaning and covers the explanation given by the participants. Self-direction includes taking responsibilities for their own learning (Tonkhao), making their own decisions (Manao), identifying the cause of the problem and solving problems relating to their studies by themselves (Gao and Tor). Clearly, these skills are core of becoming an independent researcher, the goal of PhD study. Manao's account below demonstrates her understanding that her supervisor is responsible only for giving her advice, while students themselves have to take full responsibility for their own learning.

> *I think that studying for a PhD depends on myself. Everything relies on myself such as planning the experiments and devising a method. My supervisor guides me, but he doesn't tell me that I should do step 1 2 3 4 5. It all depends on me…* (Manao, Female, 3rd year, Lines 523 – 526)

Manao's account demonstrates her implicit understanding of the role of her supervisor and the students without being told directly; this notion happens through the interaction with her supervisor. This interaction suggests that Manao is required to learn to take a proactive or self-regulated approach to her studies, while her supervisor offers advice and guides her during the study. Coming from a different academic tradition thus brings an extra layer of challenges for Thai participants upon starting their doctoral studies in the UK. The following section will then exemplify some of the key academic concerns expressed by the participants.

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3. Key Academic Concerns

3.1 Academic writing – a major challenge

Academic writing challenges were expressed to be a major issue raised by a number of Thai participants during the interviews. As a case in point, thirteen out of fifteen participants commented about experiencing difficulties in academic writing due to their lack of a wide range of English vocabulary, different writing patterns and translation from Thai when writing in English. For example, Phan was not aware that there were additional English words, e.g. financial or fiscal, which have similar meaning to the word money. In the case of Manao, she initially spent time reading journals in order to learn how to write English sentences differently, i.e. active and passive voices and formal writing styles, not starting sentences in the same pattern, and to avoid using informal language in academic writing. In Toei's statements below, the importance of the use of formal English words in academic writing is highlighted:

> *I sometimes don't use formal words. I don't know if it is correct [to use this word] or not... (Lines 227 – 228) There are [many] beautiful and formal words in English that I don't know. (Toei, Female, 2nd year, Lines 234 – 235)*

Toei's account also implies that using words correctly based on different context is also important for academic writing, apart from knowing a wide range of formal English words. In other words, understanding nuances between synonyms is crucial in conveying meaning more correctly. Apart from the linguistic challenge of writing in English, presenting research data also poses a challenge to Gao when he made an effort to describe complex graphs in his paper.

> *Reporting the results of the dissertation in a Master's degree dissertation is easier. It is a publication with my supervisor so he pays attention to my presentation of data ... It is difficult to present the graph as it becomes more complex... (Gao, Male, 2nd year, Lines 227 – 233)*

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Arguably, it is not only a Thai participant who experiences the challenge of presenting research data but also doctoral students who are native speakers of English (Stoilescu and McDougall, 2010). A possible reason for this can be explained by lack of experience with writing, particularly skill in presenting one's ideas, conveying one's voice, and stressing the importance of the research data, which requires a lot of practice. Apart from the linguistic challenges entailed in academic writing, the issue of demonstrating logical thinking skills in academic writing was also raised by many of them.

> *In Thai, we get used to writing without knowing the causes and the results…. However, in English, it is the ready-made process of logical thinking… so I get lost when I write in English…* (Lines 346 – 350) *I ask myself what's next, what's next, what's next…* (Orn, Female, 2nd year, Lines 355 – 356)

The extract from Orn suggests that the writing styles differ between cultures. Thai writing style does not focus on the non-linear pattern as its writing style concerns describing something or explaining something, and the meaning of the former sentence does not need to be linked with the idea of the latter sentence. In contrast, the Western thinking emphasises the importance of clear, distinct, linear and analytical ideas (Kim, 1997). Therefore, each culture has its own writing style, which can present an additional challenge to those who also have to write in a second language. The challenge of logical thinking, which is defined as a way of thinking that ideas are connected in a sensible or reasonable way (Springer Nature Limited, 2019), was echoed by Tor when he started his PhD, particularly his attempt to develop cohesion in his piece of writing. Interestingly, Jum remarked that the lack of regular writing practices in Thai education system from primary to tertiary education could be the leading cause of the challenges of academic writing. She expressed not being aware of using discourses or presenting both positive and negative sides or causes and effects in an argument when she wrote in English. Faahsai similarly stressed the importance of critical thinking – or the process of thinking about a subject to reach an objective judgement (Cambridge University Press, 2019) - as one of the crucial academic writing requirements for PhD students. Faahsai's view on this aspect is in accord with Brodin's (2016) study

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on Swedish doctoral students' perspectives on critical and creative thinking as crucial learning outcomes at doctoral level. Arguably, developing critical thinking is again relevant to Thai cultural value of status and respect since this Thai cultural value makes it difficult for Thai students to have a voice on their subject. Such practice is unlikely to occur in the Thai educational system since making students' voices heard could challenge authority or evoke disrespectfulness to their Thai teachers. Consequently, making their voices heard when participants write their theses or academic articles during the course of a PhD requires tremendous effort to develop their position or build an academic argument. It could be argued that these differing academic writing conventions could pose double difficulty in academic writing, apart from the language barrier when participants undertake a PhD in another language. Notably, the length of doctoral education in the UK is advantageous as it offers participants an opportunity to develop their academic literacy due to longer study time than a Master's degree by repeatedly editing their draft of thesis and writing their research papers for academic journals. This helps participants to practise and enhance their academic writing skills to reach the required standards for doctoral level while gradually transforming their academic writing practice.

3.2 Listening and speaking skills – lack of fluency and deciphering accents

In addition to academic writing, challenges in relation to listening and speaking in English were highlighted by the participants. In Tawan's case, speaking in English is a real effort as he needs to translate his ideas from Thai before expressing them in English. This aspect is also highlighted by Phan when he selected a photograph of a native lecturer specialising in Chinese history. Phan then compared himself with this lecturer as his research area is concerned with European history. The lecturer could explain clearly and fluently since he spoke in English, which is his mother tongue, despite the topic being in the Asian context. On the contrary, Phan felt that he would encounter difficulties if he were to deliver his lecture on European history in English.

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Figure 4.6 Lack of fluency in English (Phan)

*I think giving a lecture in his native language gives him an advantage
although the study is not about his culture. If I gave a lecture in Thai,
I would do it as good as him. But if I gave a lecture in English, it would
put limitations [on my lecture].* (Phan, Male, 1st year, Lines 192 – 195)

Phan expressed that he would possibly feel nervous if he delivered a lecture in
English. In the researcher's reflexive diary, the researcher noted that Phan might
feel slightly inferior to this Western lecturer. Arguably, delivering a lecture clearly
and fluently also depends on good preparation and expertise in academic areas
that the lecturers have. Thus, delivering a lecture in English is unlikely to hamper
non-native English speakers to give a lecture in English clearly and fluently. In
addition to speaking English fluently, there are other language barriers, i.e.
deciphering accents and the fast speaking rate of native speakers, which Tor faced
when he communicated with native lecturers in his PhD classrooms at the
beginning of his studies. This experience contrasted with lecturers in his Master's
degree level who spoke slowly to be understood since most of the students were
not native speakers of English.

*I feel that my lecturer in the Master's degree level tried to speak
slowly because the lecturer knew that most of the students in the
Master's degree level were international students. So the lecturer*

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tried to be understood… However, the lecturers of a PhD programme
speak fast. (Lines 181 – 182). *Most of the class were native speakers*
and it was only me who was Asian. (Lines 184 – 186). *Some were*
African, but their English was better [than Thai people]. (Tor, Male,
3rd year, Line 188)

From Tor's account, it could be argued that not understanding the lesson could
have an effect on both Tor and his lecturers since he could have difficulty in
spending time in finding other sources to enable him to understand the lesson.
Likewise, his lecturers might interpret no classroom participation as indication of
students' laziness, boredom or disinterest in the lesson. Thus, his silence reflects
the internal learning process, which may be, in Tor's case, his attempt to
understand the lesson in English. Therefore, experiencing difficulties in
understanding the lesson in English may bring disadvantages to students as it can
possibly lead to negative effect on academic performance, i.e. receiving low
grade on an assignment or failing the exam. In comparison, language barriers
between international PhD students and their supervisors were also discussed
during the interview. The cause of language barriers is possibly due to students'
low level of proficiency in English (Klang). This suggests that Thai international
PhD students must achieve sufficient English language proficiency level before
applying for a PhD programme, e.g. IELTS band 7 for an applicant for a PhD
programme at College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow (University of
Glasgow, 2019). In addition, Nan pointed out another cause of the language
barrier:

Some [students] may have a problem of not understanding what their
supervisors say. Some may be worried about the accents of their
supervisor. When students have communication problems with their
supervisors, they will submit work that is different from what the
supervisors asked them to do. (Nan, Female, 1st year, Lines 381 – 383)

Nan's account stresses the importance of the issue of language barrier that can
have a negative impact on international PhD students' academic performance, i.e.
hindering students' academic progress as students submit a different piece of

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work from what the supervisor asked them to do. Klang's account further supports the view that language barriers between Thai international PhD students and their supervisors have significant impact on students 'academic success. Klang added that the language barriers caused one PhD student to fail 'to have enough work to present for the annual review, so this student had to quit [his/her] studies.' This may stem from different expectations of both supervisors and international PhD students coupled with losing contact with supervisors. Consequently, students may not get their supervisors' advice or guidance on their project.

3.3 Different academic cultures

In addition to the challenges of the use of English, the issue concerning differences between Thai and Western academic cultures were also made prominent. As previously discussed, different academic cultures can also include participants' challenge of developing critical thinking to present their voice, stance or position in their academic writing. This may stem from the lack of regular writing practices in Thai education system as it was previously stressed in Jum's account. Apart from demonstrating critical thinking in participants' academic writing, there is also another different academic culture, i.e. classroom participation. Participants pointed out that Western lecturers encouraged students to participate verbally in classrooms (Klang and Toei). In addition, they learnt to provide reasons to support answers when speaking (Tor). For Toei, the encouragement of her Western lecturers finally enabled her to speak during her research group meeting - something that her other friends also started practising. The finding shows that Toei had to learn to adapt herself to this new academic culture of providing sound support or evidence to one's ideas.

There is a group meeting here which enables students to present their work... (Lines 184 – 186) [By contrast] I would be shy to ask questions when I was in Thailand... The teachers [in the UK] tried to push us to think and then to ask [the speaker] questions... In classrooms in Thailand, Thai teachers seem not to care if we don't ask [teachers] questions. (Toei, Female, 2nd year, Lines 204 – 205)

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The extract from Toei shows a considerably different academic culture; this also explains why Thai students are not likely to develop a habit of asking their teachers questions in their classrooms in Thailand – signalled by a lack of encouragement from Thai teachers (Stone, 2017). Therefore, Toei's accounts suggest that teachers do play an important role in encouraging their students to verbally participate in the classrooms. Arguably, encouraging Thai students to speak in their classrooms depends on their teachers' attitude to this teaching practice (Promyod, 2013). For example, if Thai teachers in secondary levels think that it may be too late to encourage Thai students to speak in their classrooms as the students may be familiar with lecture-based learning since attending nursery school or at elementary levels, then encouraging students to verbally participate in the classrooms is unlikely to occur (Promyod, 2013).Together, they seem to propagate the lack of interaction in the class and discourage any meaningful classroom discourse or debate from happening. Moreover, British learning culture of students' self-expression can be linked with individualism or the concept of independence which is defined as societies in which individuals attach importance to taking care of their own family and thus the ties between individuals are loose (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). This may be because students can express their thoughts without concern about making someone lose face or having opinions different from other friends. Individualism is defined as 'the broad value tendencies of a culture in emphasising the importance of individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group rights, and individual needs over group needs' (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012, p.303). Interestingly, Tor expressed his opinion when being asked about possible causes of Thai students remaining silent.

...Thais are taught not to speak if they think that their answers may be incorrect...Both Thai friends and our Thai teachers will tell us that the answers are not correct..., so I prefer not to say anything if my answers are incorrect. But here they don't care. I sometimes notice that what they [his PhD friends] discuss are incorrect, but the teacher [finally] guide us to the correct way. (Tor, Male, 3rd year, Lines 281 – 292)

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Tor's remarks demonstrate that another possible cause of the lack of classroom participation of Thai students may be generated from the feeling of being afraid that their answers or opinions will be incorrect. This behavior may be caused by teachers' attitude toward teaching and willingness to convey their knowledge in the classroom (Promyod, 2013). It may also be because teachers who insist on the one right answer are unlikely to engage with students (Promyod, 2013). In Tor's case, this feeling was developed by his teacher and friends who told him not to answer questions if the answers were incorrect. Likewise, this may contribute to Thai students' lack of confidence to speak in the classroom. Tor's account also reflects the concept of collectivism as part of Thai cultural identity since Thai students do not verbally participate in the classroom if their answers do not conform to the ideas of their teachers or friends. This practice is deemed to preserve social harmony. Taken together, all this may have an amalgamated impact on Thai international PhD students when they study for a PhD in the UK as they are unlikely to get accustomed to British academic convention, which focuses on debates and questioning teachers. By contrast, Klang stressed that British academics were likely to be more easy-going than his Thai teachers demonstrated via casual dressing and having no requirements for preferential treatment from their students. Although there were only two participants who pointed out this aspect, it provided details of the differences in behaviour between Thai teachers and supervisors in the UK.

> *… a professor sat on the floor … because there were no empty seats … Master's degree's students who arrived there before the professor even sat on their chairs. And the professor wore jeans … I felt embarrassed and gave her my seat, but she refused …[Back home] we have to give our seats to Thai teachers, but [this is not the expectation] here.* (Klang, Male, 1st year, Lines 157-162)

Klang's statements suggest that studying in the UK enables him to see a radically different attitude of Western researchers, as well as teachers and students' behaviour towards each other, both inside and outside the classroom. He observes that the more 'easy-going' characteristics of Western researchers indicated by casual dress, flexible and informal learning situations, tend to convey the idea that this Western scholar is not an authority whom the students need to be afraid

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of, contrasting to Thai teachers who expect (at times demand) to be respected. Another example of different academic cultural practices is the case of Toei's experience with her supervisor in the UK. Toei narrated having dinner before Christmas or a drink with other PhD friends and her supervisor. This social interaction not only establishes friendly relations between a Thai student and her supervisor, but also lessens the power dynamics between them. Taken together, these findings indicate that Thai students' experience of living abroad creates greater awareness of the differences between Thai and the host academic culture. Despite the informality of some of the interactions, they nevertheless help convey subtle but important messages on the importance of equity between PhD supervisors and students. Again, this arguably contributes to the transformation of Thai students' identity (both cultural and doctoral) manifested through the ways in which they interact with others.

In the following section, interview data with respect to participants' social relationships with both Thai friends and international friends will be discussed. This final theme explores the link between academic and social aspects since social relationships often enable participants to learn from other cultures. Moreover, social relationships can accentuate the concept and practice of collectivism which has a further impact on Thai students' approaches to learning and of non-verbal communication to maintain group harmony in case of expressing differing ideas from others.

4. Social Relationships

4.1 Friendships with both Thai friends and international friends

Cooking and having Thai food with other Thai friends were often mentioned during the interviews. Toei's photograph of having dinner with nearly twenty Thai friends perhaps illustrates that such activity entails much more than eating with friends and tends to be a 'collectivistic' activity – a distinct demonstration of group participation and cooperation by engaging in a shared task - as they helped each other prepare and cook traditional food (see Figure 4.7). Similarly, Nid selected a photograph of Thai food cooked by her and other Thai friends together (see Figure

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4.8). The following quotes from Nid strengthen the idea about collectivistic orientation of Thai culture since it highlights the importance of group cooperation and shared participation in a communal activity, in this case, helping each other cook Thai food.

> *...the photograph shows 'namjai', or 'water in the heart' which refers to expression of combined generosity and kindness which is regarded unique for Thais. I helped them [other Thai friends] wash the dishes, shred green papayas and prepare noodles for frying... We helped one another. There is no single responsibility for a particular person...* (Nid, Female, 3rd year Lines 110 -116)

Figure 4.7 Group dinner with Thai friends (Toei)

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Figure 4.8 Collectivistic orientation characterising Thai society (Nid)

Another participant, Baifern, also added that she '*felt at home*' when having familiar Thai food with her Thai friends, which implies that this kind of activity also provides her with emotional support when living far from Thailand. Baifern's sense of emotional support suggests that the home network can reduce the feeling of homesickness while she is living far from Thailand. Baifern's feeling of being at home may also reflect the link to other Thai students, which can eventually enable her to feel connected to Thai culture with other Thais who come from similar cultural backgrounds. This notion is supported by Winkle-Wagner, et al. (2010) who pointed out that socialising with co-national friends may give international students emotional support of feeling connected to home culture. Further, friends from Thailand play a role in academic support when Toei said that her '*Thai friends explained the results of the laboratory experiments'* to her when she had difficulty in understanding and reporting the results. It could be argued that the relationships of participants with their co-national friends show the importance of the environment that humans interact with to promote one's growth and development. Such notion is relevant to a specific aspect of the Bio-Ecological Systems Theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994). The theory posits that a child encounters different environments, which are formed as nested structures.

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The first setting, called microsystem, includes family, friends and school. It is the microsystem that is close and the immediate environment that a child lives, and interactions between a child and those in the microsystem will affect a child's development. In this study, the microsystem has a role in making participants bring back and recreate the microsystem that they left in Thailand in a new setting. In Toei's case, she could seek academic help from other international PhD friends, but she chose Thai friends to help her. This suggests that being inside the comfort zone of participants helps them adapt themselves to the new setting.

Apart from cooking and having Thai food with Thai friends, participants highlighted that making friends with other students from different countries contributes to learning about new cultures and getting to know more about another country. In the case of Tawan, he learnt that his Muslim friend was prohibited from touching dogs, otherwise he had to wash his hands seven times. Baifern indicated that she learnt more about Finland through a conversation with a Finnish friend.

…I met a PhD friend from Finland and she said that it was hot in X [the name of the city in the UK where she studied for a PhD] while I was wearing a jacket. I imagined that Finland and Norway would be very cold. So I [got to] know things that I have never known. (Baifern, Female, 3rd year, Lines 277–280)

Tawan and Baifern's accounts may reflect another link with other international PhD friends, apart from the link with Thai PhD friends. Consequently, this link may enable them to gain intercultural competence, which is defined as individuals' effective communication and appropriate interaction with those from different culture, ethnicity and language (Arasaratnam, 2016). Interestingly, Jum invited her supervisor and friends from other countries, and they brought their dishes to have dinner in her flat. The researcher noted in her reflexive diary that Jum's social life is regarded as an uncommon practice among Thai PhD students who are unlikely to invite their supervisors to have dinner in their residences. This practice also implies equal status for Jum and her supervisor since her supervisor can

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socialise with his student in a similar way that Jum spends time with her friends. Such practice contrasts with Thai cultural value of 'status and respect'. Jum's social life shows that living in a foreign country enables her to be exposed to a new culture and offers her an opportunity to behave differently from the way she behaves in Thailand. Building social relationships with others from different cultural backgrounds was also experienced by Toei who selected a photograph of her attending a social event (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 Partying with other PhD friends (Toei)

This illustrates that Toei's interaction with those from different cultural backgrounds may lead to her negotiating between Thai and Western culture, which subsequently enables her to understand people from other cultures better. Jum and Toei's accounts may also reinforce the notion of multiple ties with supervisors and other PhD students, and these ties may lead to their personal development in terms of intercultural competence. Moreover, these ties may enable them to view cultural value of status and respect from a different perspective as this cultural value is unlikely to be emphasised in British culture.

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4.2 Different forms of exchanges of greetings

It can also be observed that there is awkwardness in terms of Thai students' experience of adaptation when it comes to social greetings. This sub-theme was taken into consideration as it reflected participants' sense of discomfort when they exchanged greetings with their international PhD friends and local people. It also captures the role of Thai cultural identity and its impact on the social aspects of participants when they are living and studying abroad. Participants expressed their discomfort when their friends from other cultures hugged or kissed them on their cheeks as a form of greeting. Tonkhao, not being accustomed to a hug when greeting, especially by men, politely asked her friends to refrain from doing so when greeting her since she regarded this form of social greeting as impoliteness.

It is normal for them [her Western friends] to hug [a woman] in greeting though that person is a man, but for me it is not polite for a man to hug a woman... So I told them directly that it is not okay to do like this [with me]... I'm not sure if they understand it, but they don't hug me anymore. (Tonkhao, Female, 3rd year, Lines 142 – 147)

Similarly, Manao told her friends, especially men, to shake her hand instead of hugging or kissing her. At church, Phan was uncertain whether he should shake hands with other people when he started going to a church and felt uncomfortable when an elderly woman hugged him. Participants' uncomfortable feeling when they exchanged greetings with other non-Thai friends and local people may be generated from a radically different practice in Thailand, i.e. a Thai cultural gesture called 'Wai' which is initiated by a younger Thai person to show respect to an older Thai person. Further, the practice of 'Wai' has different levels of respect depending on who the other person is. The first way is the peer-to-peer Wai, which is used with friends and people in the same age by moving up the hands so that the thumbs touch the chin. The second way of 'Wai' is to bring the thumbs to the tip of the nose and position the index fingers to the forehead; this is used with older people, and the final way is to slide the hands up until the thumbs touch the eyebrows to show respect towards the royal family and monks (Powell, Amsbary and Hickson, 2014). Arguably, though this poses a challenge to some Thai

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international PhD students, Western greetings may broaden their cultural horizons as one of their experiences when living and studying in the UK.

 In contrast, such different types of greetings did not pose a challenge to Faahsai due to her familiarity of Western greetings with her host family in New Zealand for nearly three months before starting her PhD.

> *I understand the different culture in terms of greeting because I used to live there [New Zealand]. So I don't think that you cannot hug me when greeting me or you cannot touch my hands. I don't think that it [Western greeting] is impolite because I broke the [cultural barrier] down.* (Faahsai, Female, 3rd year, Lines 184 – 188)

Besides, the fact that Faahsai overcame cultural barriers when meeting people from different cultural backgrounds can help her cope with culture shock to adapt herself smoothly to the new setting. The cause of such uncomfortable feeling among these participants may be attributed to the different type of greeting that Thais are accustomed to, i.e. 'Wai', which does not need body contact. It is, therefore, not surprising that kissing or hugging each other in greeting would cause discomfort for some Thai participants. Moreover, Phan's account can reflect his links with local people at a church. This may demonstrate multiple links of Thai participants with their Thai and international PhD friends, other Thais in a temple, their supervisors and local people. The links with other Thai PhD friends may maintain participants' connection with Thai culture and, at the same time, it can reflect Thai cultural value, i.e. collectivism, and status and seniority. Further, the links with local people and international PhD students gave them opportunities to learn about different cultures though it may sometimes present a challenge to them. Thus, living in a new setting offered them an opportunity to broaden their views on the practice which differed from the one in their home country and enabled them to learn new cultures and meet new people, and therefore make their experience of being educated abroad worthwhile.

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4.9 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the impact of Thai cultural identity on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK. First, Thai cultural value of status and respect posed a challenge to participants when they dealt with their supervisors in the UK. This is because some of them were likely to respect their Western supervisors in a similar way to respecting their Thai teachers. Consequently, they were unlikely to disagree, or question their supervisors' ideas. This impact also included their classroom behaviour in the UK as some of them may remain silent to show respect to their lecturers. However, living and studying in the UK gave them opportunities to see the difference between Thai and Western cultural values in terms of status and respect as the relationships between younger and older people were likely to be more equal in the UK than in Thailand. For some participants, this led to a modification in their behaviour towards their supervisors and their attempt to verbally participate in a classroom in the UK. At the same time, participants retained their Thai cultural identity, which was reflected by their interaction or ties with other Thai international PhD students and other Thais they met in the UK. This mirrored Thai cultural value of collectivism that Thais were likely to take care of each other and help each other even though they were in the UK. Finally, there were academic challenges faced by participants. These included language barriers, challenges of writing a thesis and academic papers in English, lack of fluency when speaking English, and challenges of listening comprehension. These findings can answer the following research questions.

1. How do Thai international PhD students perceive their cultural identity as they live and study in the UK?

Thai international PhD students perceived their cultural identity during their interaction with local people and their supervisors in the UK. For example, some of them felt that they were treated differently by two elderly people during a hillwalking trip in the UK and by their supervisors. As a case in point, some participants became aware that Western cultural values attach importance to

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equality, contrasting with Thai cultural values that take the concept of seniority into consideration (Witayarat, 2017). In Thai cultural value, Thai teachers are viewed as an authority figure, which, in turn, can create the feeling of respect and being afraid of challenging teachers' ideas (Baker, 2008; Deveney, 2005; Foley, 2005). Arguably, respecting teachers as an authority contrasts with one of the Buddha's teachings - the Kalama Sutta. This principle of Buddha's teaching states that we should not believe anything or anyone immediately without giving careful attention and full scrutiny, even if that person is our teacher (Mahidol University, 2002). Thus, in this case, there is a mismatch between practice and religious belief. The findings in this study connect with Hofstede's cultural dimensions by classifying Thai individuals as likely to exhibit and report large power distance culture in which inequalities are likely to be tolerated and accepted (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). The findings of this study also highlighted the differences between Western philosophical tradition and Asian learning beliefs. As Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li (2013) point out, the Western philosophical tradition has the legacy from the Athenian schools of thought which focuses on questioning the knowledge of authority figures. As a result, this practice nurtures a critical debate in which no authority figures are exempt from being questioned by others in Western academic culture (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). This practice contrasts sharply with Eastern academic culture which emphasises the importance of respecting teachers as a person who behaves well inside and outside classrooms which, in turn, should deserve respect (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006). The differences in this cultural value may cause misunderstanding of Asian international PhD students' behavior as their supervisors may interpret reluctance to question as the lack of criticality instead of being modest or a sign of respect for their supervisors (Ryan, 2012). Further, participants perceived their Thai cultural identity when they had social interaction with other Thai people and Thai international PhD students in the UK. This is likely to relate to transnationalism, which is used to explain international students' relationships with their co-national friends when they are living abroad. In this study, these relationships reflect collectivism when another Thai woman offered food to a participant when she visited a Thai temple – reflecting responsibility of a person who look after another person, and when participants and their Thai friends helped each other

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prepare and cook Thai food together. This connects with work by Cristina-Corina (2012) who states that people in collectivistic society tend to be interdependent, and may attach importance to maintaining group harmony in relationships.

(1.1) How does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity affect their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation?

The findings of this study demonstrate that Thai cultural value of seniority affects participants' academic acculturation in terms of their relationships with their supervisors and their oral participation in a classroom in the UK. This notion may be consistent with Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance. The theory posits that a person will change or moderate his belief and attitude when there is a difference between what a person knows or believes and what he does. To reduce this dissonance, individuals will change their attitudes or beliefs, change their behaviour and add new cognition by thinking about their behaviour in a different manner or context. Cognitive dissonance can be applied to the context of this study since participants may have to modify this behaviour by questioning, verbally participating in their classrooms or having a disagreement with their supervisors when studying in the UK - something which is likely to be in contrast with the concept of hierarchy in Thailand. Additionally, participants attempted to become active learners in their new academic setting through increased attempts to engage in self-directed learning, demonstrating their critical thinking in their theses, and to overcome linguistic challenges both of which may reflect the notion of threshold concept. Their attempts to meet the standard requirements mirror a state of 'liminality' (see 2.5.2 Threshold Concepts and Doctoral Education) which occurs during their transition from being a PhD student to becoming an independent academic researcher (Lovitts, 2005; Meyer and Land, 2006). During this liminality, participants experience a state of being stuck (Kiley, 2009) which may be caused by the impact of Thai cultural value on participants when they attempt to conform to Western academic culture, e.g. from being passive to active learners in their classrooms and demonstrating their critical thinking in their theses. Concerning the aspect of psychosocial adaptation of participants, the

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findings demonstrate the role of different greetings in different cultures, which can cause uncomfortable feelings to some participants. This reflects the notion that haptics or "the use of touch and physical contact between interactants" (Neuliep, 2018, p.275) differs across cultures. In Asian cultures regarded as noncontact cultures, physical contact between people who are unfamiliar with each other is unlikely to occur (Neuliep, 2018). Thus, this can explain why some Thai participants felt awkward in situations requiring touch and avoided touching when possible.

(1.2) Does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity evolve as a result of living and studying abroad? If so, how? What are the contributory factors to this?

Yes, living and studying in the UK may lead to an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity of participants. For instance, some participants could freely express their opinions, which differed from those of their supervisors, and a participant even invited a supervisor to her flat for dinner. However, this does not mean that participants abandon Thai cultural values, e.g. status and respect, but they may see that this is unlikely to be applied to their lives and studies in the UK. Thus, this may prompt them to renegotiate their Thai cultural identity and British cultural values during their studies in the UK. This is relevant to the notion 'acculturation' in relation to international education. Acculturation refers to learning about another culture to conform to the norms of the new setting and it contrasts with the notion 'enculturation' defined as the acquisition of first culture (He, 2002). Tension arises when thoughts and common practices deeply embedded within international students' psychological domain, that is, enculturation, are challenged and contested by the necessity that forces international students to learn, unlearn or re-learn ideas, thoughts and behaviours, that is, acculturation, in order to survive and flourish in the new environment (Elliot, Baumfield and Reid, 2016). The Thai international PhD students in this study had to adapt themselves to British cultural values in terms of equal relationships with their supervisors to lead compatible lives in the UK.

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4.10 Conclusion

This study has extended understandings of the role of Thai cultural identity in terms of hierarchy and collectivism in Thai international PhD students' relationships with their supervisors, their Thai friends and other people as well as their orientation of learning focusing on status and respect, reservation about debate or discussion in class and the state of quietness. It demonstrated the challenges faced by participants, and these challenges may possibly be caused by cultural trait influences. The theoretical framework of Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures could be useful to assist lecturers coming from different countries to reflect on the idea of culture and help them prepare for working with international students, particularly Thai international PhD students. Additionally, this study also sheds light on identifying potential strategies to help enhance international PhD students' learning experience, e.g. slower speaking rate of native lecturers especially at the outset of the PhD programme when students may need time to be familiar with accents. There may be at least one area from which they could most benefit, i.e. learning to develop their arguments, which could also be beneficial to local PhD students (Kiley, 2009). Further, the diversity of networks in which these cohorts have become embedded serves as a tool to see participants' links with Thailand, which can provide them with emotional support when facing challenges in a foreign country. At the same time, even these networks, i.e. links with other international PhD students and local people, can sometimes pose a challenge to them, but the networks can give them the opportunity to learn about different cultures. A remaining question is whether participants' renegotiation of Thai cultural identity may pose a challenge or may help them fit into Thai society upon their return to Thailand after they get a PhD in the UK.

This study has implications for university agents, scholarship funders, and other agencies or organisations who encourage Thai international PhD students to study in the UK in terms of considering organising a pre-arrival orientation and producing culturally responsive teaching practices for Higher Education staff in the UK (see 6.3 Practical Implications for more details). Further, it is important for Thai

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international PhD students to take an active role in participating in both academic and non-academic activities or events to gain maximum benefit from what international education has to offer (see 6.3 Practical Implications for more details). This study has limitations to generalise to other international PhD students from different cultural backgrounds (see 6.4 Limitations of the Body of Work for more details). Concerning future research, the investigation of supervisors' perspective concerning supervision of Thai international PhD students is an interesting research area to obtain important views on the students' adaptation when they study in the UK (see 6.5 Recommendations for Further Research for more details).

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5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, re-adaptation is used to link with the word adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK in Chapter 4. Re-adapt is referred to "become adjusted to changed conditions again" (Oxford University Press, 2011, p.1196); re-adaptation is concerned with individuals' return to the home environment after an extended stay in another country (Martin, 1986). It is reported that returning home after studying abroad can be an exciting moment for returnees (Roberts, 2012). However, it has been reported that international students' experiences of returning to their home country may be regarded as a complex and multi-layered experience for them to cope with as they surprisingly engage in their own version of re-adaptation to their home culture (e.g. Ai and Wang, 2017; Alandejani, 2013; Kartoshkina, 2015). Nevertheless, on the positive side, it has been reported that returning to a home country enables these returnees to demonstrate the personal growth, maturity and understanding they have developed of both their home and host culture (e.g. Gill, 2007; Gu, 2011; Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010; Patron, 2007).

Study 2 is linked with the previous chapter, which explored academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK. Thus, the aim of this second study is to extend this work and explore the experiences of a different group of fifteen Thai international PhD returnees who completed their PhD in the last five years from British universities and are now residing in Thailand.

In this study, telephone interviews were employed and conducted via Facebook Messenger since telephone interviews are more cost efficient and more practical given the logistics of conducting international research (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Photo-elicitation technique was again employed during remote semi-structured interviews to acquire deeper and more reflective qualitative data.

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According to Banks and Zeitlyn (2015), photo elicitation, which refers to using photographs during a semi-structured interview, is apt to evoke comments, memory and discussion. The use of participatory visual methods also enables researchers to gain access to participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs which may not be achieved by reliance on verbal expression which is dependent on the interviews skills and own research priorities (Hryniewicz, Griffiths, and Thompson 2014; Glaw, et al., 2017). Moreover, combining photographs with interviews helps strengthen and enhance trustworthiness of the findings and generates analytical rigour since data obtained from photographs can be triangulated with interview data (Clark, 2013; Hurworth, 2003; Harper, 2002). Using photographs in interviews also assists the researcher to obtain participants' details of what their experience was like when they were living through it (Silver and Farrants, 2016). Additionally, the use of photographs in this study serves as a channel for participants to demonstrate their views, experiences and the meaning behind photographs (Menter, et al., 2011). Participants' photographs thus facilitate researcher's interpretation of the meaning behind the photographs, e.g. its reflection of metaphor that participants used when they talked about their photographs. Finally, photo elicitation is regarded as a creative and innovative approach. This is because, to date, there are limited research studies that employ such techniques, particularly with international students, and there is no research study on Thai international students that use this technique, to date. Previous studies that employed photo-method are generally in the domains of health psychology, developmental, education and occupational research (Witayarat, Reid and Elliot, 2018). In this study, the photo-method complements an approach to qualitative analysis, i.e. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is an inductive qualitative approach with a two-stage interpretation, that is, "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p.53). Thus, IPA offers an interpretative lens as it aims to investigate how events and objects are experienced and given meaning by individuals; the emphasis is on 'what is it like to be experiencing this or that for this particular person' (Eatough and Smith, 2010, p.181). With a focus on research into Thai PhD returnees' experiences of their re-adaptation to Thailand, the

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Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) is regarded as a perfect fit as IPA is aimed at exploring personal meaning and individuals' lived experiences and examining "how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith and Eatough, 2007, p.35-36). Moreover, IPA enables the researcher of Study 2 to advance the technique of data analysis and recognise greater opportunities brought about by the refinement of the interview technique and the potential for more interpretation. For example, the researcher paid attention to participants' specific use of language such as metaphor or researcher's interpretation of a particular sentence expressed by participants to help the researcher capture participants' thoughts and experiences. These ways of analysis were not employed in Study 1 when the researcher used Thematic Analysis in the data analysis. Before proceeding further, it is important to provide an overview of the benefits of studying abroad.

5.2 Results and Effects of Study Abroad

5.2.1 Personal Growth and Development

Research studies have reported that studying abroad can promote heightened independence and maturity for the student (e.g. Brown, 2009b; Gill, 2007; Gu, 2011; Liu and Winder, 2014; Tarry, 2011). In a quantitative study conducted by Cisneros-Donahue, et al. (2012), the findings of a questionnaire indicate that participants develop an enhanced sense of independence which in turn, enables them to gain new skills which include even basic living skills, e.g. locating a restaurant, taking public transport and buying items in another country (Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012). Liu and Winder (2014) add that independence may lead to an increase in self-confidence as international returnees may feel that they can deal with challenges by themselves and assert their autonomy in new situations. Arguably, when living in another country, international students are likely to face different challenges that do not occur if they still live in their home country. For example, international students may have to call letting agents in English to arrange viewing the room or deal with an energy supplier to arrange their own utilities when they move into a new flat. Further, becoming independent means that international students have the freedom to assert their independence and

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engage in autonomous decision making which, at the same time, can pose a challenge to them when they are required to re-adapt to a new routine to align with their families. In a mix-method study conducted by Rujipak (2009), interview findings indicate that Thai international returnees from Australia report that they lose their privacy upon their return to Thailand as they have to share rooms with other siblings or other family members, contrasting to their life in Australia where they have their private rooms. This tension between adaptation and re-integration is a core consideration in this chapter.

5.2.2 Criticising home culture

It has been reported that the experiences as a result of studying abroad enable students to see cultural differences between the home and host country. This leads to the critique of their home culture. For example, findings of both qualitative and quantitative questionnaires by Kartoshkina (2015) indicate that 68% of American students who go abroad for one or two semesters to English-speaking or non-English-speaking countries report that they are likely to have negative perspectives towards their own American culture. When being asked to elaborate on their answers, participants think that American cultural values are likely to focus on career and monetary success and consumerism, whereas little attention is paid to environmental issues and learning about other cultures and languages (Kartoshkina, 2015). It can be noted that these are the opinions of participants in Kartoshkina's study, which may not be generalised to the whole American student population. Arguably, the findings are likely to contrast with the notion of "in-group favouritism" (Tajfel and Turner, 2001, p.99) defined as a tendency to favour a person's own group which leads to the perception of the preference for the in-group to the out-group. In this case, participants criticise their own American culture instead of admiring their own culture. Kartoshkina' interview findings are likely to contrast with Wang's (2016) findings as some Chinese international participants state that they are likely to be more open-minded towards their home culture than before studying abroad. For example, some participants explain that there tend to be problems in China as the country is in an era of transformation. Consequently, they should accept things that happen in Chinese society instead of complaining about problems (Wang, 2016).

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Kartoshkina and Wang's studies are relevant to the context of this study as being exposed to different cultures may enable international returnees to see cultural differences between the home and host country, which lead them to compare the host and home culture and possibly develop both positive and negative perspectives toward their home culture. In another qualitative study conducted with international postgraduate taught students in the UK, some Thai participants compare the different attire worn by Thai lecturers in Thailand and Western lecturers in the UK (Cleary, 2016). They explain that Western lecturers tend to wear casual outfits, contrasting with Thai lecturers who are likely to wear formal dress (Cleary, 2016). The findings suggest that living and studying abroad enable international students to see cultural differences between their home and host country, and this experience promotes analytical insights and in turn, contributes to the development of their critical thinking. Arguably, Cleary's findings imply that Thai lecturers' wearing formal clothes may create an image of an authority and formality, which implicitly favours respect of those of higher social standing such as certain professional groups.

5.2.3 The use of the experiences of studying abroad in a profession

Gill (2010) points out that international returnees benefit from the development of their academic critical thinking and employ this skill when they work in their home country. In Gill's qualitative study, which investigates the experiences of Chinese international graduates when they return to China, the findings indicate that participants employ critical and analytical skills they gain in British postgraduate courses in their profession. For example, a Chinese participant selects and presents controversial social issues for TV documentaries in a media company she works for, while another participant employs critical and analytical skills promoted in British postgraduate courses in a Chinese classroom. Arguably, a television programme that promotes controversial social issues can lead to being censored by the Chinese government as it may be regarded as an inappropriate subject (see Beech, 2016). Thus, critical and analytical skills that participants gain as a result of their experiences of studying abroad can at times be difficult to employ in their professional work. Similarly, British postgraduate courses which

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focus on critical and analytical skills in a Chinese classroom may be challenging to implement back home as Chinese students are not accustomed to this type of teaching approach (O'Sullivan and Guo, 2010).

5.2.4 Developing intercultural competence

It has been reported that the experiences of studying abroad can lead to the understanding of other people from different cultures and the development of an open outlook. Brown (2009b) points out that the experience of studying abroad allows international students to meet those from different cultural backgrounds which, in turn, is likely to facilitate being open-minded, tolerant and accepting new practices and values. For instance, in Brown's qualitative study, international postgraduate students who study in a British university report that they are likely to be open to other cultures and respect others' beliefs and behaviours. Brown's findings are in line with cultural relativism, which means that there are no absolute criteria to regard a single culture as superior or inferior to those of another (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Gill (2007) supports this idea by stating that interacting with others from a variety of cultural backgrounds may transform individuals' prejudices and bias. For instance, the findings from Gill's qualitative study indicate how a Chinese postgraduate student who is living with his Japanese flatmate changes his views on old prejudices and Japanese stereotypical misunderstandings. This account connects with the assumptions underlying Contact Theory (Allport, 1954, and see 2.3.2 Social and Emotional Aspects for more details) which posits that interacting with people from other cultures can lead to mutual understanding. Arguably, individuals can learn about different cultures by watching documentaries and become open-minded, but interactions with people from other cultures give them direct experience, which may intensify or accentuate their learning. It is worth noting that becoming interculturally competent as a result of studying abroad can be an advantage of international returnees when they work with foreign nationals in the workplace of their home country (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). For example, Gu and Schweisfurth's findings of their mixed-method study indicate that a Chinese postgraduate returnee who works in a foreign company reports that he is likely to understand his British employer's decisions and his ways of thinking due to his exposure to British culture

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during his Master's degree study. This contrasts with other Chinese colleagues who do not have the overseas experience; they are less likely to understand their Western colleagues, and it sometimes even creates conflict and misunderstandings.

5.2.5 Positive Career Outcomes

It has been reported that the experiences of studying abroad largely contribute to positive career outcomes or career success of international returnees who return to their home country to work (Lin-Stephens, Uesi and Doherty, 2015). In Lin-Stephens, Uesi and Doherty's (2015) quantitative study, the findings of questionnaire indicate that participants experience an increase in their confidence in the context of their enhanced employability, as a result of their studying in Australia. They also report that they can apply the knowledge and skills they obtained when studying abroad in their career, and they are likely to be satisfied with their salary and find a job in a targeted position/level in a company they like. However, the findings of Lin-Stephens, Uesi and Doherty's study can be enhanced by adding some qualitative focus to give more details of these outcomes. For example, the researchers can ask participants what the differences between international returnees and home-based colleagues are when they work. Arguably, the increase in participants' self-confidence may result from the challenges they face and their abilities to overcome these challenges when they study abroad. In a mixed-method study conducted by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), they demonstrate through their qualitative method that studying in the UK enables Chinese postgraduate returnees to become more flexible than their Chinese workmates who have never studied abroad. As an example, a participant illustrates that his work requires a lot of travelling abroad which is quite easy and a simple task for him. By contrast, his Chinese workmates who have never been abroad find travelling to be a complicated thing as they are not accustomed to packing their bags and getting on the plane.

The available research strongly suggests that the experiences of studying abroad are associated with reported personal and professional growth and development. This includes enhancement of critical thinking while presenting international

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returnees with opportunities to broaden and develop their intercultural competence, which can constitute marketable qualities that their employer may value.

However, returning to a home country can also pose a challenge to international returnees in terms of their relationships with others and their re-adaptation to work and wider cultural/societal expectations in their home country. Thus, the following section will discuss these issues in detail.

5.3 Re-entry Challenges

According to Sussman (2000), adaptation to the new culture in a host country may result in a change in sojourners' cultural identity and the change in their cultural identity or awareness of change in cultural identity can be noticed when they return to their home country. Walling, et al. (2006) add that individuals' change when living abroad may lead to the feeling of 'not fitting' in their home culture. Thus, this section will focus on the difficulties of returnees' re-adaptation to their home country after living abroad. The theoretical framework derived from the original theory of culture shock by Oberg (1990) may prove useful here. The notion of 'reverse culture shock' (RCS) has been proposed by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) – an extension from theory of culture shock by Oberg (1960) (see Figure 5.1).

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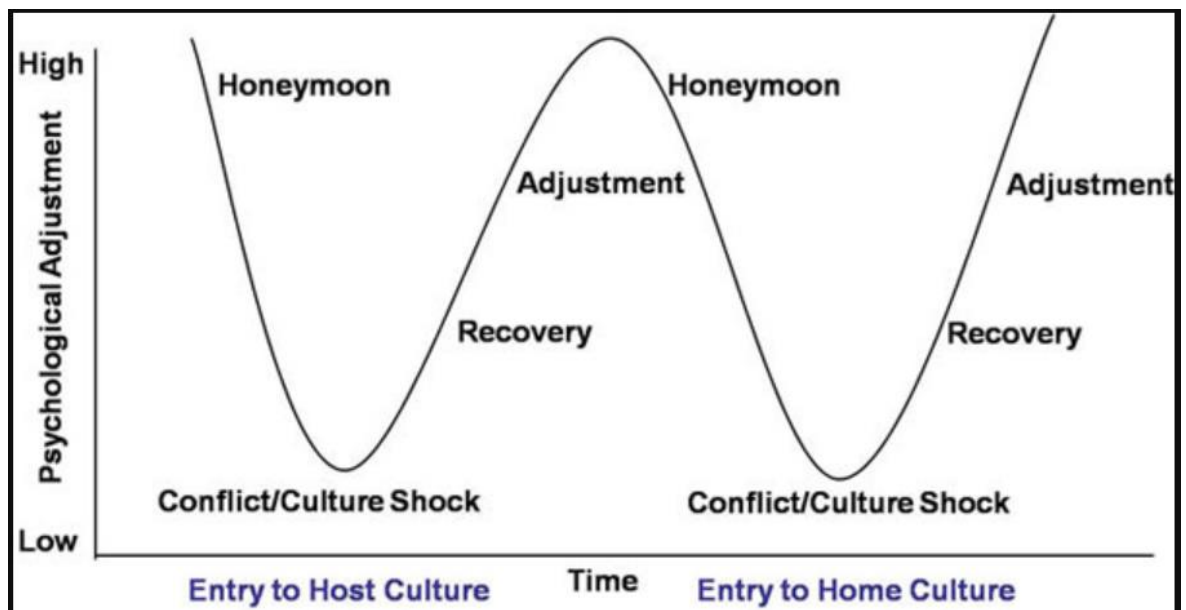
Figure 5.1 W-curve representing Reverse Culture Shock
(Weinberg, 2015; adapted from Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963)

Culture shock refers to individuals' experiences of losing familiar signs and symbols of social interaction of their own culture when they live in a country that they do not know (see Oberg, 1960 in 4.3.3 Dealing with Culture Shock). Culture shock is the U-curve in figure 5.1). Concerning RCS, Gaw (2000) defines it as the difficulties and challenges that individuals face when they re-adapt to the culture of their home country after living abroad. When individuals return to their home country, the second half of the W-curve begins in a similar way that individuals experience abroad (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963). RCS is the second U-curve after the first U-curve in figure 5.1. RCS has been employed in studies on the experiences of international returnees when they return to their home countries. For example, Le and LaCost (2017) conduct a qualitative study to explore the experiences of Vietnamese international returnees from the US. The interview findings demonstrate that participants face reverse culture shock upon their return to Vietnam. For example, participants feel frustrated when they see litter on the street or other Vietnamese people who do not fasten seat belts (Le and LaCost, 2017). Zhu and Gao (2016) point out the challenges faced by Chinese international students who return from both English and non-English speaking

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countries include difficulties with social relationships with their co-nationals. For instance, they are likely to have more informal interactions with their employers, which may be influenced by Western cultures, and this makes their colleagues think that they are likely to be impolite. Additionally, participants report that living abroad for a certain time makes them forget some Chinese words, and some English words pop out of their mouths. Consequently, other Chinese may think that they are showing off (Zhu and Gao, 2016). However, Zhu and Gao's (2016) work has limitations as the findings need to have interview quotes to deepen an understanding of the difficulties and the challenges faced by Chinese international returnees. At the same time, Zhu and Gao's (2016) work stresses the importance of challenges of interacting with the co-nationals of international returnees upon their return to their home country. Thus, the following section will explore this issue in detail.

5.3.1 Challenges of Interacting with Others

The research suggests that international returnees tend to face challenges in terms of interacting with other people in their home country as a result of their changed behaviour which differs from the behaviour of others. In the findings of a qualitative study conducted by Wang (2016), Chinese participants who return from the US and Australia are likely to be direct, contrasting with their Chinese co-nationals' indirect way of talking. Consequently, their Chinese co-nationals are likely to feel uncomfortable when they talk to the participants, whose way of talking with others tends to diverge from Chinese cultural norms, which focus on being moderate and avoiding going to extremes in terms of the way of saying anything (Wang, 2016). Arguably, this may be because these participants return from Western countries, which focus on conveying direct messages or the meaning, which is expressed clearly, and directly (Liu, 2016). This contrasts with individuals in a collectivistic society where meaning can be implicitly stated to avoid face-threatening conflict situations or maintain the face of interlocutors (Liu, 2016). For example, an American employer asks his Chinese employee to come to the office to work on Saturday. Though this does not frequently occur, a Chinese employee tends not to refuse his American employer's requirement directly. He told his employer that he is unavailable as Saturday is the birthday of

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his son as a hint of refusing to save the face of his American employer (Wang, 2008). Additionally, Gill's (2010) findings from a qualitative interview study conducted with Chinese international returnees from the UK indicate that there is likely to be hostility from Chinese people towards Chinese participants in terms of finding a job. The findings suggest that some Chinese people may think that they would compete for work with those who do not have the opportunity to study abroad. Moreover, Starks and Nicholas (2017) state that being accustomed to Western practice can also pose another challenge to international returnees as they may have a conflict with their co-nationals who do not follow similar practices of returnees. In Starks and Nicholas's study, interviews with Vietnamese English language educators who returned to Vietnam after their two-year study in Australia, Starks and Nicholas (2017) find that participants maintain queuing practice whereas their Vietnamese co-nationals do not. Instead of staying quiet, these participants tell others to practise queuing – the adoption of this Western norm they became accustomed to while living in Australia. Arguably, participants' offence of telling others to queue may lead to loss of face, which is considered as important in a collectivistic society as in Vietnam. The findings of Starks and Nicholas's study may be similar to the findings of Wang's study as international returnees employ verbal communication style that is unlikely to conform with the culture of their home country, i.e. explicit or direct messages which may be cultural norms in Australia, the US and the UK. This different way of interaction may contrast with implicit or indirect messages, which can be cultural norms in Asian countries. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), individuals in a collectivistic society may prioritise fostering strong relationships with others so that others can take responsibility for looking after each other. Thus, any action that can provoke confrontation should be avoided in order to preserve the harmony of the group. The researcher acknowledges that Hofstede and Hofstede's claim is broad and general so does not take individual differences into consideration. Considering Starks and Nicholas's study, these scenarios indicate that participants in their studies may face challenges of reverting back to Vietnamese practices upon their return. Moreover, the way that participants adopt the habit of speaking directly is likely to be relevant to High and Low-Context Cultures. High-context cultures, more common in collectivistic societies,

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rely on implicit communication and nonverbal cues, e.g. facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice. This contrasts with Low-context cultures, which rely on explicit communication (Liu, 2016). Thus, the findings of Starks and Nicholas's study highlight potential cultural conflicts when participants speak directly therefore causing offence to their co-nationals in Vietnam who may prefer indirect communication. Arguably, it is likely to be paradoxical as the literature in the previous section demonstrates that international returnees tend to be open-minded and tolerant as a result of exposure to a different culture abroad. However, it is unlikely that this attribute is expressed after international returnees return to their home country since it somehow leads to 'cognitive dissonance', i.e. they may no longer want to accept certain cultural norms and practices of the home country. Another example, which reflects issue, related to difficulties with re-adaptation to returnees' home culture is the findings from interviews conducted by Rujipak (2009) with Thai international returnees from Australia. The findings demonstrate that participants feel frustrated with the Thai cultural value of a seniority system as having a disagreement with an older person can be regarded as disrespectful behaviour. They also report that Thai cultural value is likely to differ from Australian culture as they could disagree with an older person if they have good reasons (Rujipak, 2009). Arguably, this, again, can be an example of cultural differences between Thailand, which is regarded as a high Power Distance country, and Australia, which is likely to be low Power Distance (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Consequently, this can affect not only Thai international returnees' relationships with others, but their overall adaptation when they return to Thailand.

5.3.2 Challenges of Re-adaptation to Work in Home Countries

In addition to challenges of forming relationships, it is reported that international returnees likewise face challenges in the workplace in their home country. Those who return to academia are likely to be weighed down by teaching and bureaucratic duties, which then hinder their research-based practice (see Pant, 2009 in 2.6.2 Re-adaptation to Institutions or Organisations and Delicado, 2017 in 2.6.4 Disadvantages of Studying Abroad for more details). As an example, Wang

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(2016) states that there can be mismatched expectations between international returnees and local colleagues and administrators in higher education institutions in China. In Wang's mixed methods study, colleagues and administrators of the institutions where international returnees work report that they hope that the returnees would have excellent teaching and conducting research skills, but the returnees fail to fulfil this expectation. However, the returnees point out that there are difficulties in applying the skills and knowledge they gained abroad to their work. For example, large classes make it difficult for the returnees to organise discussions or oral presentations for their students, and correct students' assignments or give students feedback. These pedagogical methods had been valued and they now want to apply these in their own contexts of learning such as classrooms. Consequently, some of the returnees feel that the skills they developed abroad are unlikely to apply to their teaching in China as they have to employ teaching methods that they experienced during their undergraduate degrees in China, which do not focus on classroom discussions, and this makes the returnees feel unsatisfied with the work in their home country. Arguably, mismatched expectations between Chinese international returnees and their colleagues and administrators may cause conflict between both parties. This is because colleagues and administrators may think that the teaching method that returnees want to employ in their classrooms does not match Chinese students' concept of learning, i.e. Chinese students are likely to be reserved thus are unlikely to verbally participate in their classroom. Ai and Wang (2017) add that it could also be the mode of examination that makes it challenging for international returnees to apply what they have learned abroad to the classroom in their home country. In their study, Wang narrates his own experiences as a Chinese international PhD returnee from Australia. Wang points out that his attempt to employ an English teaching methodology, focusing on classroom discussion that he learnt abroad is unlikely to be successful in his EFL classroom. This may be due to the different concept of learning of Chinese students who may not be accustomed to debate or classroom discussion (see more details in 2.3.1 Different Academic Practices). Additionally, Rujipak (2009) points out that high expectations from participants' employers are likely to be a challenge that Thai international returnees face at work. For example, participants state that their employers

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expect them to have a good level of ability in English and to be an expert in a specific field. Consequently, these expectations put pressure on participants as they feel that their English may not be fluent upon return and they could not perform every task that their employers have assigned them (Rujipak, 2009). These expectations seem to imply that Thais tend to believe that studying abroad is better than studying in local Thai universities, and this then prompts Thai international returnees' employers to think that they can work or perform a task better than those who study in local universities.

In summary, challenges of re-adaptation to work back in the original home country exist among international returnees. These challenges can arise from a combination of the mismatched expectations of returnees, their students, their colleagues as well as administrators of their institutions in their home country. Arguably, it can be challenging for international returnees to employ the knowledge they gain during their studies abroad and to match the expectations of others due to differing concepts of learning as well as the limitations of working conditions and socio-political tolerance presented by their home country.

To date, there are limited research studies on the effects of studying-abroad experiences on returnees' identities, values and behaviour upon their return to their home country, particularly research conducted with Thai international PhD returnees (see 4.2 The Context for more details). Further, though Rujipak (2009) conducts a longitudinal study that aims to investigate changes in psychological adjustment of Thai international students when they lived and studied in Australia and after they returned to Thailand, the study does not specifically focus on Thai international PhD students and returnees. This is because most participants in Rujipak's study are Thai international postgraduate taught returnees. International doctorial students experience a particular range of adaptation experiences due to the requirement to engage in extended study abroad. This proposed study may add to the knowledge base due to the different emphasis on exploring adaptation over an extended period of time (as found in a PhD). Thus, the under-researched experiences of Thai international PhD returnees and the ways in which their lives and study in the UK affect their cultural identity and

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personal and professional lives upon return to their home country are arguably worth exploring.

5.4 Theoretical Framework

To explore the re-adaptation of Thai international PhD returnees upon their return to Thailand, this study also employs Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures (see 4.5 Theoretical Framework for more details). While recognising the criticisms of Hofstede's work, particularly that the Dimensions of National Cultures are not generalisable, its dimensions of high Power Distance and Collectivism have utility as they can explain the aspect of Thai participants' challenges of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their social relationships with others upon their return to Thailand. Additionally, this study also intends to extend the threshold concept by proposing the liminality or 'the state of being stuck' even after receiving a PhD (see 2.5.2 Threshold Concepts and Doctoral Education for more details). Finally, the study draws from perspectives of transnationalism (Vertovec, 1999; 2009) to explore the types of links made with other Thais when participants return to Thailand (see 3.5 Transnationalism for more details).

5.5 The Study

This study aims to examine the effects of evolved sense of Thai cultural identity on the challenges of Thai international PhD returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions, personal changes, career advancement and their social relationships upon their return to Thailand. The research questions were:

1. How do Thai international PhD returnees perceive their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, their academic development and personal changes?

   (1.1) What are the challenges that Thai international PhD returnees face when they repatriate in terms of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions?

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(1.2) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ their knowledge and experience gained by their PhD studies in the UK when interacting with other people?

(1.3) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ their knowledge and experience from their PhD studies in the UK for their career advancement?

5.6 Method

This section starts by presenting research design, the details of participants who participated in this study. Then materials used for data collection and procedure are also discussed. The section concludes by presenting the procedure for data analysis and offers an ethical reflection on the study.

5.6.1 Research design

This study employed qualitative participatory research methods to examine how an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity could contribute to the challenges encountered by Thai international PhD returnees as they again seek to re-adapt to Thai culture and their institutions, personal changes, career advancement and their social relationships when they return to Thailand. The data collection involved one-to-one interviews supplemented by photo-elicitation methods. The study employed purposive sampling which relies on the judgement of the researcher to select the members of population to be studied (Battaglia, 2011). An attempt was made for homogeneity in terms of, being born and raised in Thailand and having completed doctoral degrees in British universities in the last 5 years. The transcribed verbatim data were analysed by adopting the epistemological and practical principles of analysis informed by Interpretative phenomenological Analysis or IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2008).

5.6.2 Participants

As the inclusion criteria for participants were Thai international PhD returnees who completed their degrees in British universities in the last 5 years, Study 2 did

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not include those who completed their doctoral degrees from other English-speaking countries, e.g. the US and Australia. Participants were recruited via the Facebook site for Glasgow Thai Students Community, the group for current and former Thai students in Glasgow to share their experiences, to support each other and to organise events. The researcher posted a message to invite participants on the website. This type of research participant recruitment was also supplemented with a 'snowballing' technique or participant referral technique, so long as the participants satisfied the criteria for participation. Participants' profile was shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Participants' profile (n = 15).

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Pseudonym	Gender	Age finishing a PhD	Length of stay in the UK (years)	Length of time since returning to Thailand (years)	Funding for study	Occupation	Research area
Tonnam	Male	32	5	1	S	Lecturer	Social Science and Public Policy
Chokdee	Male	42	4	3	S	Lecturer	Engineering and Physical Sciences
Khunpol	Male	29	5	1	S	Lecturer	Science
Nithi	Male	36	4	0	S	Lecturer	Philosophical, Anthropological and Film Studies
Kaohorm	Male	36	5	1	S	Lecturer	Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Kaimook	Female	30	5	1	S	Lecturer	Biological Sciences
Kanom	Female	30	5	2	S	Lecturer	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Wanmai	Female	30	5	3	S	Lecturer	Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences
Tookta	Female	30	5	1	S	Lecturer	Humanities
Naiphan	Female	31	5	2	S	Lecturer	Humanities and Social Sciences
Kanphlu	Female	38	4	3	S	Lecturer	Humanities
Louktarn	Female	35	5	2	S	Lecturer	Science and Engineering
Sailom	Male	31	5	1	Sf	Self-employed	Science and Engineering
Plaifah	Female	41	5	1	S	Researcher	Engineering
Saensook	Female	35	4	2	S	Researcher	Social Sciences

5 years in the UK included time spent for a Master's degree in the UK

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S means Scholarships
Sf means Self-funding

Before presenting materials used in Study 2, the background of Thai international PhD returnees is provided to situate their professional circumstances and motivations to complete a PhD in the UK. Participants' decisions to study for a PhD in the UK were in many cases primarily driven by their interest in the programme and good reputation of UK Higher Educations, while others include shorter length of time spent to get a PhD compared to the US and wanting to work with the same supervisors for those who had studied in the UK for their Master's degrees. Based on these accounts, one can interpret that the research area that participants would like to specialise in was not offered in Thailand, which suggests that the subjects of specialisation and research areas in the UK are likely to be unique or different from the ones in Thailand. Further, the shorter length of PhD programme in the UK, compared with the programme in the US, can help Thai sponsors minimise funding. The longer the funding recipients spend studying for a PhD, the more it could cost the sponsors.

5.6.3 Materials

Interviews were conducted via Facebook Messenger. Four participants agreed to use their webcams or smartphone cameras for the interviews. However, the researcher decided not to continue to use the smartphone camera during the interviews since some participants stated that they were in their houses, a private place. It was also their preference not to be interviewed using webcams or smartphone cameras. In addition, NVivo 11, computer software, was used for identifying organising themes as well as enabling wider data management in a secure password protected project folder.

5.6.4 Procedure

Study Two received separate ethics approval from the College of Social Sciences, the University of Glasgow (see Appendix 12). This approval also covered all aspects

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of this photo-elicitation research, i.e. the research design, participants' consent, protection of participants and photo subjects' identity, extent of the use of photographs and data storage. No incentives were offered to participants. The interview questions included various aspects of participants' feelings and expectations upon their return to Thailand, their re-adaptation to work and professional life, to personal or social relationships, to their home country. They were also asked to describe the best thing that happened and things they found challenging after returning to Thailand (see Appendix 14). Before commencing the interview, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with one participant who obtained her PhD from a university in the UK in 2015. The aim of the pilot interview was to check clarity and understandability of the interview questions and to refine interview style (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The process of conducting the pilot interview was similar to Study 1 where photographs taken by participants were sent via Facebook Messenger to the researcher before the day of the interview. The researcher paid attention to ethical issues to ensure wider 2018 General Data Protection Regulation adherence. This aimed to check whether participants understood instructions for taking and/or selecting photographs. For example, if participants took photographs where people are recognisable, they should have the signature of the photo subjects on the consent form. In this study, participants did not take photographs where people are recognisable as the selected photographs were a photograph of a participant's hand, objects, e.g. a book and a laptop, and a photo where people were taken from the back and from a great distance. Thus, there were not any consent forms for photo subjects. The pilot participant sent the photographs to the researcher one day before the interview. This pilot participant suggested that the first question to ask participants to describe their expectations upon their return from the UK needed to give more details of the expectations. Thus, to clarify this, the researcher added "job expectations or expectations of the relationships with others." Prior to each interview, Thai PhD returnees were asked to choose existing photos or to take photographs of five items using their mobile phones. Specific instructions for selecting or taking photos were also provided to the participants (see Appendix 10). These photos served as a prompt during the interviews with the aim of generating a rich discussion with participants. Before conducting the interview,

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the researcher sent participants a Plain Language Statement (see Appendix 2), a Plain Language Statement for Photo Subjects (see Appendix 4), a consent form and a consent form for photo subjects (see Appendix 6 and 8) at least five days before the day of the interview via Facebook Messenger. This enabled participants to ask the researcher if they had any questions. The day before the interview, participants sent the researcher their photographs to be used during the interviews on Facebook Messenger so that the researcher could check the photographs. The interviews were conducted in Thai because doing so encourages openness, clarity and ease of expression of ideas (Welch and Piekkari, 2006). Further, conducting the interviews in English could make participants worry about the use of their English, e.g. making a grammatical error or limited English vocabularies, when they provided their accounts. After the interviews were conducted, photographs were saved securely in the University of Glasgow OneDrive - the University of Glasgow online repository. Then the researcher deleted participants' photographs on Facebook Messenger immediately after receiving the photographs in Facebook Messenger for security. According to the Facebook website (Facebook, 2019a), information shared will be removed from its site and it is underway to comply with 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (Facebook, 2019b). On the day of the interview, the researcher repeated the purpose of the research and told participants that they could ask any questions during the interview. Participants sent the consent form with their signatures to the researcher. Each individual interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes; the interview was audio-recorded as a preparation for a verbatim transcription.

5.6.5 Data Analysis

Each transcript was read several times, and data were systematically and inductively analysed by using Interpretative phenomenological Analysis or IPA, a qualitative approach that aims to examine the lived experience of individuals and how they make sense of that experience (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Data were systematically and inductively analysed by following guidance on IPA proposed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). Themes or quotes were determined by following

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the guidance proposed by Krueger and Casey (2000; see 4.7.5 Data Analysis) because their guidance includes important considerations for selecting a theme, not just by focusing on comments or themes that are most frequently said. Then the researcher selected a part of a transcript that had already been coded and translated from Thai into English so that the researcher's supervisors could cross-check the researcher's coding. Then the researcher sent the part of the transcript with the researcher's codes attached, translated from Thai into English, to the researcher's supervisor so that the supervisor could code the transcript and the researcher could check the accuracy of coding with the supervisor later. The researcher followed guidelines on translation proposed by Pan and De la Puente (2005) and Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson and Deeg (2010). Then the researcher coded the transcript by dividing paper into three columns. The column on the left-hand side was the transcript while comments on the transcript were made in the middle column, and themes were in the right-hand column. When the researcher finished coding the transcript, she asked the supervisor to meet to exchange the coding withone another. The result of cross-checking the researcher's coding with her supervisors indicated that there was 90% comparability. Concerning incorporating photographs in the study results, selected photographs by participants that corresponded with quotes were identified. Photographs served to enrich and validate superordinate themes and subthemes. Superordinate themes were the clusters of subthemes, which were concise phrases that captured interesting or important aspects of participants' accounts (see Table 5.2). A reflexive diary was used during data collection and data analysis (see 4.7.4 Procedure for its benefits). In this study, the reflexive diary assisted the researcher to note the tone of voice of participants as it could enable the researcher to know participants' feelings during the interview. The reflexive diary was also used to record ideas and personal opinions about participants' quotes, which were useful when the researcher engaged in the analysis. For example, the researcher's note of participants' personal changes and the challenges they faced upon their return to Thailand helped the researcher to group these accounts together as a superordinate theme and to report this theme in the result section. The reflexive diary was also employed as a tool to aid the researcher's reflections and to remind the researcher to present some interesting photographs selected and taken by

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participants e.g. a photograph of a cake reflecting a metaphor of a participant's re-adaptation to Thailand. These photographs were then used to complement the interview evidence. Simultaneously, photographs that corresponded with participants' quotes were identified to enrich and validate superordinate themes and subthemes.

5.6.6 Ethical Reflection

The Ethics committee of College of Social Sciences approved the ethical requirements concerning participants' willingness to volunteer, avoidance of harm, anonymity, all aspects of photo-elicitation research (see 4.7.6 Ethical Reflection for more details), study design, participants' consent and photo subjects' identity, photo subjects' identity and extent of the use of visual data and data storage. To establish trust with participants, the researcher explained the research protocol in relation to confidentiality and data handling to the participants. Consequently, the aim was to make participants feel comfortable to discuss openly issues related to difficulties or challenges they faced upon their return to Thailand. The researcher did not know any participants before starting to conduct this study. The interview was not anticipated to be distressing or stressful for the participants, however support information was made available on the participant information sheet in the event of this occurring. Moreover, having already conducted Study 1, the research skills of the researcher had been further developed, e.g. skills in conducting interviews and data analysis. These acquired skills were helpful in enriching the overall conduct of the study and offering a unique perspective to the interpretations.

In the following section, the researcher will discuss the results of Study 2. It starts from demonstrating a structure of superordinate themes and subthemes, background of participants and finishes by presenting the study results.

5.7 Results

The aim of this study was to explore Thai international PhD returnees' experiences of re-adaptation following completion of their PhD and return to Thailand. This

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study offers a re-orientation of context where adaptation is taking place, no longer in the UK but now as a returner to 'home' following international PhD study. It focuses on PhD returnees' re-adaptation back into Thai culture and in particular offers insights into re-engagement with academic institutions, personal and professional relationships and professional and career advancement. The themes from the transcripts were generated from the interviews in connection with the research foci - participants' experiences in the UK and then their experience when they return to Thailand. Verbatim interview data and photographic data from fifteen participants were employed complementarily to report the themes surrounding Thai international PhD returnees' experiences of their re-adaptation. Table 5.2 identifies a hierarchical structure of superordinate themes and subthemes specific to this study.

Table 5.2 Superordinate themes and sub-themes

Superordinate Themes		
Personal changes	Professional transition	Social networks
Sub-themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes
1.1. Independence becoming an independent person, independent problem-solving and its impact on work implications	*2.1. Managing expectations* Challenges of dealing with colleagues and sponsors' expectations	*3.1. Re-establishing connections with old friends* Reconnecting with friends from high school and university
1.2. Adaptability Being adaptable to life in Thailand	*2.2. The capacity to re-adapt to work* Accommodating employer's requests and conducting research on local issues	*3.2. Expanding social ties* Ties with other Thai PhD returnees
1.3. Critical thinking Different cultures in terms of debate and criticism		

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Superordinate Themes		
Personal changes	Professional transition	Social networks

Sub-themes

1.4 Dealing with cognitive dissonance
Questioning seniority and
wanting to live alone
but being required to behave
in accordance with Thai
cultural value

Regarding the effects of studying abroad on participants, living in a host country for three or four years contributed to their personal changes (SO Theme 1) which include becoming an independent person, demonstrating their adaptability to life in Thailand and showing their capacity for critical thinking. Re-adapting to these changes offers an interesting lens through which to examine how this re-adaptation operates when they return to their home country after completing their PhD. As twelve out of the fifteen participants work as university lecturers, the following superordinate theme focuses on participants' transition from Thai international PhD students in the UK to a university lecturer or a researcher in Thailand (SO Theme 2) which includes managing their colleagues' expectations and the capacity to re-adapt to work. The final superordinate theme highlights participants' reconnection with their old friends and other Thai PhD returnees (SO Theme 3). These three superordinate themes are particularly relevant in developing a close understanding of participants' re-adaptation to their home country, living with others and their institutions as well as the benefits of UK educational experiences to their career advancement. The following section presents the first superordinate theme, i.e. personal changes.

1. Personal changes

1.1 Independence

Living and studying abroad contributed to the participants' sense of independence which they acquired and therefore developed a higher level of maturity and self-

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direction. Many of these participants were living on their own for the first time in their lives (Gu, 2011). Eight participants out of the fifteen stated that they adapted to doing things alone, e.g. having food alone, going to the library alone and travelling in Europe alone. Consequently, this gave them a sense of independence and freedom.

> *… I do many things alone … going to the library, going to the supermarket, doing shopping. I spent more time alone. (Lines 59 - 61) … Before [going abroad] I didn't like going shopping alone … as I didn't feel confident. But there [in the UK] I got used to doing things alone and I did many things that I had never thought I would do. … When I arrived [in the UK], I had to find a flat alone … I had to fight with a bad person. I had to find a way to deal with a problem alone. … It [this experience] made me resilient. (Naiphan, Female, lecturer, Lines 61 – 67)*

Naiphan's account implies that doing things alone when living abroad for a certain time is acknowledged as a positive way of gaining independence. It made her become independent and a strong person since she had to make her own decisions to solve problems without consulting anyone. Naiphan uses the word "alone" many times in her account, emphasising her solo experience while living and studying in the UK. This experience suggests that doing things on her own boosted Naiphan's confidence. Interestingly, finding a flat in a foreign country seemed to offer her strength after being taken advantage of - what made this incident crucial is that it was something she had never done in Thailand before. Further, being on her own abroad is not simply about taking care of herself, cooking her own food or washing her own clothes. It also requires relying on one's own life skills. As was noted in the reflexive diary, participants' independent life abroad requires re-adaptation to living with their family when they returned to Thailand since they have already got used to living alone and conducting their lives without waiting for or consulting others. This challenge was reinforced by Kaimook to show her re-adaptation to living with her family.

> *When I was in England I lived alone, and I got used to working, having food and sleeping whenever I wanted. But since I have come back*

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home (returned to Thailand), I have to wake up to have breakfast …
and dinner with my parents …. I can't creep into the kitchen to have
a snack …. I don't have my own room, so I work in the living room.
It is difficult to concentrate on my work while my parents are
watching television. I have to adapt again to living with others.
(Kaimook, Female, lecturer, Lines 156-162)

Kaimook's account demonstrated that she lost her privacy as she did not have her own room in Thailand and she may feel she is interrupted by others in her family. This is relevant to the findings of interviews conducted by Rujipak (2009) with Thai internationals returnees from Australia; participants in Rujipak's study explained that they even had to share their rooms with other siblings or other family members. Thus, living with her parents again requires Kaimook to adopt a new routine to align with her parents' wishes, preference and living situation. Further, Kaimook's comparison with her life in the UK reflects her dual frame of reference, which also characterises the tendency of people who live abroad to compare their circumstances and life experiences between their home country and their host country (Guarnizo, 1997). This dual orientation often results from exposure to a different culture that is not confined to one society (Lam and Warriner, 2012). This, in turn, can make her feel that she has less freedom to live her own life and loses the experience of living her own life. In the case of Kaimook, it seems that she is facing the challenge of losing her privacy due to the fact that she does not have her own room. This notion is supported by her selected photograph, which reflects her re-adaptation to her previous ways, e.g. eating ice cream with bread and living with her family (see Figure 5.2). The notebook in the background represents her attempt to work in the living room at the same time as her parents are watching television. It is Thai cultural norm that adults are still expected to live with their parents even when they are already working (Deenan, 2007).

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Figure 5.2 Re-adaptation to living with family (Kaimook)

I selected this photograph of an ice cream and there is a computer as a background. This photograph shows that I have to adapt to living with my parents, and try to enjoy spending time with my family. (Kaimook, Female, Lecturer, Lines 155 – 156)

As previously discussed, participants spoke of increased independent personal identity as a result of their experiences of living and studying in the UK. Moreover, exposure to Western academic culture for several years tends to develop participants to take the lead in designing and carrying out research projects (Phillips and Pugh, 2015). However, there is an ironic situation in which a participant, Tonnam, was brought back to Thai traditional pedagogical practices based on a passive approach that concentrates on transferring knowledge and rote learning (Pitiyanuwat and Sujiva, 2000) when he taught a course in Thailand. His account is interesting because although Tonnam developed skills associated with critical and autonomous thinking during his PhD in the UK, his view on pedagogical practices remained the same, i.e. still being characterised by teacher-dependent styles or passive learning of students, rather than promoting students' abilities to acquire knowledge by themselves. His photograph and his account reinforce this idea.

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Figure 5.3 Transmitting my knowledge to students by the connector (Tonnam)

… the white paper is the list of students who enrolled for [X] that I taught. The connector is linked [with the projector]. When I studied for a PhD, I spent time [studying] alone in my room. But since I have returned [to Thailand], I feel as if I'm doing homework for my students such as preparing teaching materials and slides. Everything I'm doing is for my students, not for myself. And the connector in the photograph represents the knowledge transmitted to my students. (Tonnam, Male, Lecturer, Lines 99 – 105)

Interestingly, Tonnam selected a photograph of a connector, which was used as a metaphor in his account for the way he utilised the knowledge gained during a PhD in the UK to teach his students. His account demostrates that spending most of his time studying alone during a PhD means "*doing something for himself.*" This phrase suggests that studying for a doctoral degree is compared with something that Tonnam did to benefit from it, i.e. gaining knowledge, developing his research skills and gaining a degree. Interestingly, his phrase; "*not for myself,*" demonstrates his responsibility to teach his students in Thailand, and this aligns to the Thai cultural belief that teachers devote themselves to teaching their students for them to gain knowledge and acquire moral values (Deveney, 2005). Apart from becoming an independent person, studying for a PhD in the UK seems to serve as a training ground for learning to be an independent academic. The following quote of Kanom supports this aspect.

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When I returned [to Thailand], my employer asked me about the course I wanted to teach. ... the employer gave me freedom to teach the course that I wanted. (Lines 92-94) ... I have the freedom to teach the course based on my style of teaching and I can select the teaching materials that I want to use. (Lines 95 - 96) ... I also have the freedom to teach according to teaching patterns that I used to learn. ... I have this kind of freedom. (Kanom, Female, Lecturer, Lines 100 - 101)

The extract from Kanom demostrates that she uses her initiative to design her own course based on her expertise and to decide for herself which teaching materials are appropriate for her course. This includes her ability to solve problems that arise during the course that she runs. In her account, Kanom states that she has "*freedom*" to design her course four times in Thailand, which implies that this kind of freedom is very important for her. Additionally, having the freedom to teach her own course emphasises the notion that Kanom can make her decisions on her psychology course without waiting for someone to tell her what to do. This suggests that getting a PhD in the UK has given Kanom plenty of academic development opportunities for her career as a lecturer. Similarly, the following account of Naiphan demonstrates that being an expert in her research area enables her to make her own judgement about the content of her oral presentation. This also implies how Naiphan has become independent from her PhD supervisors as she manages to make her own decisions on her presentation without consulting anyone. Arguably, living abroad and gaining a doctoral degree in the UK has moulded Naiphan to become an independent academic while also living independently in a foreign country.
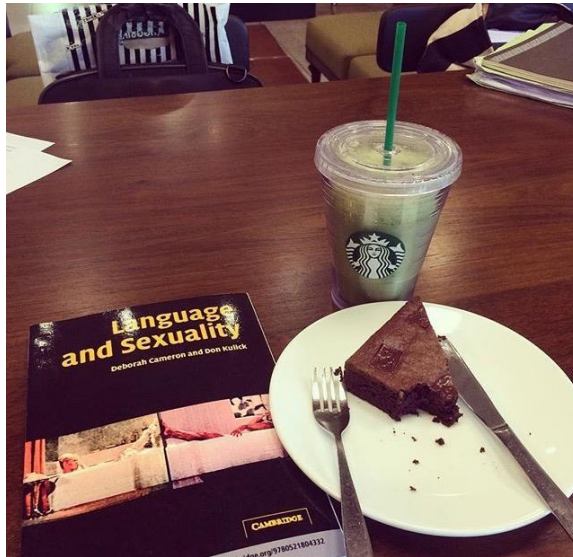
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Figure 5. 4 The topic of my thesis in public talks (Naiphan)

The department held public talks … (Line 241) I was assigned the task of giving an oral presentation… The topic was about the topic of my thesis, i.e. language and sexuality, on which I had claimed to be an authority … (Lines 244 - 245) I felt so excited … I felt stressed … the content of the talk was ready in the morning [which was the same day as the event]… (Line 249) However, in the end the presentation went smoothly… I managed to do it …(Naiphan, Female, Lecturer, Lines 252 – 255)

The cause of Naiphan's excitement and stress of her oral presentation may stem from the lack of her practice of oral presentation. When she said "I had claimed to be an authority", it is an indication of her confidence of knowledge about her research area. Becoming an expert on the topic suggests that Naiphan knows what to include in her presentation and how to manage it. This demonstrates that she is able to work on her own initiative. Naiphan's case reflects the core of the outcome of a PhD study, i.e. a capacity to become an independent researcher.

In addition to becoming an independent person and an independent researcher, being adaptable to life upon participants' return to Thailand is also an important issue. Thus, the following sub-theme will discuss this issue in detail.

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1.2 Adaptability

In addition to becoming independent, the issue of being adaptable to participants' lives in Thailand was also a prominent issue discussed by the participants. This was perceived to be important during and after completion of their doctoral studies. For Kanphlu, her conversion from Buddhism to Christianity during a PhD was challenging when she returned to Thailand as she needed to adapt her life to a Buddhist environment and live once again with her parents who are Buddhist.

… there was the Department's sixtieth anniversary celebration. They (her colleagues) gave food to monks and made merit for the benefit of deceased colleagues. I was not sure what I should do during the ceremony. I do not need to tell my colleagues that I am Christian now. So I sat [on a chair], but did not Wai [place palms of hands together with fingers extended at chest level] … (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 184 -187)

Kanphlu's quotes demonstrated her adaptability since she participated in a Buddhist ceremony but maintained her Christian practice by not pressing her palms together, which conveyed a sense of respect for the Buddha. However, not pressing her palms together may cause a misunderstanding among others who might question why Kanphlu did not make the expected gesture. In the following photograph as noted in the reflexive diary, it is interesting to see Kanphlu selected a photograph of cakes that she baked after she returned to Thailand to represent her ability to adapt herself to the place where she now lives.

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Figure 5.5 Cake as a symbol of adaptability (Kanphlu)

I selected this photograph to reflect the need for adaptability … it is like I get a [cake] recipe, but I cannot bake it like the one in the recipe … I need to adapt, decorate it, add more sugar. The heat in the oven [in Thailand] might be stronger than the one I used before in [a UK city where she undertook a PhD]. (Lines 206 – 208) It is sometimes difficult to follow the cake recipe for the first time. It is difficult for my cake to come out exactly the same as the one in the recipe. So it requires some adaptation. (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 256 – 258)

Kanphlu's use of the phrase that "it is sometimes difficult to follow the cake recipe for the first time" to produce a similar result to the one in the recipe indicates that adaptability may not happen suddenly. It takes time to do so. Moreover, what is striking in Kanphlu's extract is her nostalgia for her life back in the UK as she attempts to maintain the lifestyle she used to have when she undertook a PhD in the UK, i.e. baking cake. In terms of participants' re-adaptation to Thai culture, some participants said that they were able to re-adapt to the traditional values expressed in their country and workplace. Re-adaptation to Thai culture was reinforced by Kaohorm when he stated that:

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*… I may have to adapt myself to appropriate behaviour towards senior colleagues … (**Kaohorm, Male, Lecturer, Line 54**)*

Kaohorm's quote indicates that he is likely to be aware of the different culture in terms of respecting senior people when he said "I may have to adapt myself." His experience in the UK is likely to have enabled him to notice that Western culture tends to attach less importance to this idea than Eastern culture. Consequently, this awareness of the different culture may assist him to re-adapt to Thai culture, which implies that he would not openly express his opinions which are dissimilar to his senior colleagues.

In addition to adaptability to life when participants returned to Thailand, their interview accounts also indicate another issue, i.e. participants' change in terms of adopting a critical attitude. Thus, the following sub-theme will discuss this issue in detail.

1.3 Critical thinking

The issue of being critical was stated many times during the interviews by three participants. It shows that living and studying abroad for many years is likely to have contributed to participants' confidence in conveying counter arguments with their peers and family. Critical thinking refers to "the objective, systematic, and rational analysis and evaluation of factual evidence in order to form a judgement on a subject, issue, etc" (Oxford University Press, 2019). The following account of Kanom reflects this issue.

> *I discussed Brexit or the Scottish referendum with my flatmates. I thought it was interesting, and we talked about politics. But when I returned to Thailand, I did not know why I talked about this subject as Thais talk about celebrities. (Kanom, Female, Lecturer, Lines 74 – 76)*

Kanom's quote suggests a sense of loss since she is unable to find anyone within her own social circle with whom she can discuss Brexit or Scottish referendum. Further, the different topics of conversation including celebrity news and gossip may cause Kanom to feel left out when she is in a group of Thai friends. Thus,

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Kanom reflects different interests between her and her Thai peer group after her return to Thailand. She also hinted about missing what she left behind in the UK when she said: "I did not know why I talked about this subject as Thais talk about celebrities." Another interesting account from Louktarn also demonstrated a change in terms of adopting a critical attitude. When Louktarn first moved to live and work in a northeast province of Thailand, she was asked to show respect for a Thai spirit house. This practice requires the individual to ask permission from the spirit so that people who would like to live in an area are able to live in their own house. However, Louktarn questioned this practice by comparing what it was like when she was livng in the UK. She selected the following photograph to reflect her concern for this practice. Although the photograph is not a Thai spirit house, Louktarn selected it; the photograph represented the idea of collectivism in Thai society as individuals respect a spirit who is seemingly residing inside the house to protect their properties.

Figure 5. 6 A Chinese spirit house (Louktarn)

I selected this photograph because I want to show the idea of religion... when I first lived here [in a northeast province of Thailand], they [people in the area] told me I had to show respect [for a Thai spirit house]. I questioned why I should do this. When I lived in the UK, I did not need to do this. I did not even see any spirit houses [in the UK]. I think it is too much in my mind. I think there are too many rituals [in Thailand] and it is sometimes unnecessary. (Louktarn, Female, Lecturer, Lines 171 - 174)

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Louktarn's quote and photograph marked a change in her attitude towards Thai culture. After living in the UK for many years, she questioned showing respect for the spirit residing in the house in exchange for protection, peace and prosperous fortune. Inside a spirit house, there are figurines of animals and people to represent the property's guardian spirits, and the owner offers incense sticks, flowers, food and drink to the spirit daily to express the owner's gratitude to spirits who bring good luck or to ask them to keep the house safe. This belief implies that Thai cultural values underline the concept of dependence of a person on others, i.e. the spirit in the house, which also suggests the highly collectivistic nature of Thai society as a person depends on others to be protected. This contrasts with Western cultural value of independence or individualism as individuals can protect themselves to lead their own lives without asking the spirit for protection. Louktarn is likely to find such practice unimportant when she says: "I think it is too much in my mind" and "there are too many rituals." This quote demonstrates that Louktarn believes in her own ability to protect herself as she does not need to ask help from the spirit in the house to help her. The way that Louktarn displays autonomous thinking may be useful for her career development since she can demonstrate her independent thinking in her academic papers or teach her students to develop their critical thinking. However, this again tended to pose a challenge to Louktarn when she came back to Thailand since people who suggested this practice to her may think that she disrespects the spirit or rejects her own Thai culture. Similar to Louktarn, Tookta's photograph and her account below also showed her developed capacity for critical thinking.

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Figure 5.7 Western culture, the culture of speaking out (Tookta)

I selected this photo to reflect the idea of speaking. Before I went there [the UK], I rarely spoke out. But everyone [here] in the UK spoke out. There was a workshop organised by a person who was a lecturer in the international flat where I lived. This person tried to inspire me to realise the importance of verbal participation, and it took me a long time to do so. I finally dared to speak out in that cultural context [Western culture]. (Tookta, Female, Lecturer, Lines 124 – 127)

Tookta's account demonstrates different cultural orientation in terms of verbal expression between Eastern and Western culture. Her statement saying "I finally dared to speak out in that cultural context" implies that she is not experienced or confident in conveying her own intentions and opinions before she lived in the UK. It also suggests that some aspects of Thai culture and specific learning practices do not place a high value on debate and critique, in contrast to Western culture where debate and criticism are part of its social conventions (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). When Tookta said "But everyone [here] in the UK spoke out", it implies that she has to verbally participate in the discussion or risk becoming alienated from the group. Therefore, it is the situation that forced her to do so. Further, her account implies that debate and criticism relate to the concepts of independence and individualism in Western cultural values. This is because some individuals may express their opinions independently from others,

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regardless of their relationship. Moreover, the word "dare" indicates that she has to build up her confidence until she feels ready to express her opinions during the workshop in the UK. Arguably, it does not mean that every Thai PhD returnee can have this skill but taking part in this type of activity regularly over a long period of time can modify one's behaviour to become a critical thinker. Tookta's account also implies that she is likely to feel afraid of giving her opinions before she left Thailand, and there might be numerous reasons e.g. feeling afraid of making mistakes or making others 'lose face'. Tookta's practice of 'questioning' and 'debate' is likely to help her write a research paper or academic papers and read books. Conversely, her critical thinking may lead to the feeling of disrespect to senior people and being misinterpreted as a form of aggression. Thus, her critical thinking may alienate her from ordinary Thai people who would prefer not to criticise others' perspectives. Additionally, upon participants' return to Thailand, participants' critical thinking has an impact on their relationships with other people. This issue was reported by Kaimook who explained that adapting to Thai culture of avoiding speaking frankly poses a challenge to her.

> *They [Thais] do not speak directly ... . if they do not agree with someone, they do not speak directly ... . I could express my opinion in the UK [when I disagree on the topic of conversation] ... (Kaimook, Female, Lecturer, Lines 243-244)*

Kaimook compared her experiences when she was in the UK where she could have a disagreement on an issue. This contrasts with Thai culture, which stresses the importance of avoiding speaking frankly to anyone. This cultural difference implies that Western culture does not attach importance to saving or losing face since a person can freely offer criticism whereas in Thai culture, people avoid doing so. It suggests that Thai cultural value of indirectness serves to maintain social harmony, which strongly characterises a collectivistic society. Another participant, Wanmai, compared her experiences of social status of senior people in Thailand and the UK.

> *When I returned to Thailand, I saw some people did not wait in a queue. They had that prerogative as senior people. I think they have to wait since the senior people that I saw in the UK waited. ...*

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> *Another thing is that there is etiquette when referring to senior people. I can use a senior person's first name in the UK. It seems there is no barrier between us. (Wanmai, Female, Lecturer, Lines 203 - 207)*

Wanmai's account implies that people should be treated equally, regardless of age. Further, her quote demonstrates that Thai culture places emphasis on status and respect since younger people cannot call older people by their first name. The names should be preceded by 'Khun', which is equivalent to Mr. Mrs. or Miss. Therefore, younger people address older people as 'Mr. Uncle' or 'Mrs. Aunt' (Hays, 2013). It is interesting that Wanmai uses the metaphor of "barrier" to represent that Thai cultural value of status and respect cannot facilitate the interaction between younger people and older people. The barrier that Wanmai mentioned could be the use of language that Thais call another person who is older than them. This reflects the hierarchical level in Thai language, which is based on the social status and age of another interlocutor that a person is speaking to (Mann, 2012).

Taken together, gaining a doctoral degree and living in the UK does lead to personal and professional changes, which provide benefits in terms of their career advancement. At the same time, participants may experience difficulties in re-adapting to Thai culture due to these personal changes. Concerning the benefits of their career, participants can employ their adaptability to living and studying in the UK to be able to work with different types of people across different learning settings. In addition to adapting a critical attitude, which marks personal changes of participants upon their return to Thailand, the interview accounts reveal participants' attempt to deal with cognitive dissonance. Some of them are required to behave in the way consistent with this Thai cultural norm despite their uncomfortable feelings. Thus, the following sub-theme will discuss this issue in detail.

1.4 Dealing with cognitive dissonance

It is possible that living and studying in the UK for a number of years gives participants exposure to Western cultural value of equality, which contrasts, with

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Thai cultural value of seniority. Consequently, this leads to cognitive dissonance for some participants as they have to modify their behavior by showing their respect to senior people despite their disagreements with them. The following account of Louktarn echoes her cognitive dissonance when she had to follow her grandmother and mother's advice on the way to bring up a child though she disagreed.

> *… my grandmother told me to give my baby water to drink. However, this contrasts with the information on the Internet… . However, my grandmother insisted on this belief. I had to place a water bottle [near my baby] so that they could see it… (Lines 128 – 130) … I did not feel happy …. but I couldn't argue with her as she has seven children so she had experience. I do not want to break off family relationships … (Louktarn, Female, Lecturer, Lines 138 – 142)*

Louktarn's extract demonstrates that she had to follow her grandmother's advice when she said "I couldn't argue with her." This may be because she has to show respect for the older person, and she was likely to attach importance to having a good relationship with her grandmother rather than expressing her feelings and having a disagreement with her grandmother. Despite being backed up by the information on the Internet, Louktarn chose to keep silent and hide her feeling instead. The following photograph by Louktarn reflects her disagreement with her mother and grandmother on their advice about the way to bring up her daughter.

Figure 5.8 Different way to bring up a child (Louktarn)

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> *I selected a photograph of a toy to represent the [different] styles of bringing up children… . My family [my mother and my grandmother] clings to a traditional view, which differs from mine. …My grandmother and my mother tell me what to do, which was OK as I did not have experience [of bringing up a child]. However, what they want me to do was not the same as what I read about. (Lines 122-126)*

In this extract, Louktarn described her mother and grandmother's view as "a traditional view" which implies that she disagrees with their advice on bringing up her daughter. Further, Louktarn's account stresses the importance of hierarchy in Thai cultural values when she said "my grandmother and my mother tell me what to do." This indicates that her mother is likely to obey her grandmother and expect Louktarn to do the same thing that her mother used to do. Interestingly, Louktarn's account is quite ironic as it demonstrates that Thai cultural value of status and respect is deeply ingrained in her personality despite her exposure to Western academic culture that focuses on debate and a challenging attitude. This is because she chose to do what her mother and grandmother told her although she disagreed with them. This contrasts sharply with her previous account as she questioned the way that Thai people show respect for a spirit house which may reflect Western cultural value of independence of one's ability to take care of oneself. Another account of Naiphan also reflects cognitive dissonance as she would like to live in a flat alone but she finally decided to stay with her parents who wanted her to live with them.

> *… When I returned [to Thailand] my life is the same as before. I still live with my parents, and they go with me everywhere I go. [Yet] I am not the same person. (Lines 81 – 83) While I was away, they would miss me very much … I travelled [to many countries in Europe] but they stayed here and waited to see me again. This is the reason why I want to stay with them, although I feel uncomfortable… (Naiphan, Female, Lecturer, Lines 218 – 221)*

When Naiphan said "my life is the same as before", this gives the phrase two meanings. It suggests that she has to live with her parents. Concurrently, it conveys

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indirectly her sense of losing her independence that she enjoyed when she lived and studied in the UK. The feeling of independence sharply contrasts with her quote "I still live with my parents, and they go with me everywhere I go." This quote also contrasts with her experiences of living her own life in the UK, which can make her feel uneasy and awkward to be accompanied by her parents wherever she goes. The loss of Naiphan's independence means she will be unable to go back home late as it will cause her parents worry. Naiphan continued to state that "I am not the same person", the implication being that she has changed into an independent person. Interestingly, the fact that she decided to live with her parents despite her uncomfortable feelings seems to conform to Thai convention of adults living with their parents. One can interpret that it is normal for young Thai adults to live with their parents. This may result from Thai cultural value, i.e. feelings of the indebtedness towards parents or Bunkhun in Thai since parents presumably sacrifice themselves to bear and bring up their children (Suksomboon, 2009). It is, therefore, an obligation to take care of their parents in old age (Suksomboon, 2009). This suggests that the collectivistic Thai society attaches importance to obligations towards one's family rather than focusing on one's own needs and preferences. This contrasts with Western cultural convention of young Western adults moving out of their parents' homes as a person focuses more on independence and being able to make one's own decisions (Howard and Galambos, 2011).

In addition to personal changes as a result of studying and living abroad for a number of years, the findings of this study indicate participants' transition from a PhD student to a scholar. Thus, the following section will discuss this issue in detail.

2. Professional transition

2.1 Managing expectations

When participants returned to Thailand and started working again, they faced a challenge in their workplace as their colleagues and sponsors hold expectations. This challenge was pointed out by participants who were both university lecturers and researchers. Chokdee's account supports this issue.

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> *When I arrived here [in Thailand], I was expected by my colleagues ... . It is like I have an important role to play in the institution, in the Department ... . I was expected to help my colleagues ... such as [providing] training and publicising the Department so that the Department will become well-known and [develop skills to conduct] research. (Chokdee, Male, Lecturer, Lines 91-97)*

The text in the extract indicates Chokdee's transition into his new role, i.e. from a PhD student to an academic. Further, when he said "I have an important role to play in the institution", it implies that he thinks he is a person who has high ability to work. His account also suggests that Thai PhD students who gained a doctoral degree in the UK are likely to have the privilege of a good education and get special treatment. Interestingly, his new responsibilities as an academic go beyond academic areas since the new responsibility of publicising the Department requires planning and communication skills and marketing. The cause of high expectation of participants' colleagues may be due to Thais' belief that overseas education is superior to local ones (Tarry, 2008). Individuals who graduated abroad are typically regarded to possess a lot of knowledge and have more academic skills than others who graduated in Thailand. This high expectation can be illustrated by Saensook who is a researcher in a Thai government organisation. She mentioned that she was expected by her colleagues to lead her research team, a role that she did not initially anticipate.

> *[My colleagues] expected that I could lead the team and teach my younger colleagues.... My responsibility was to see which subject a person specialises in and decide what training is needed for a member of the team based on a skill that the person lacks, as we [the organisation] recruited people who received degrees from a bachelor's degree to a Master's degree. (Saensook, Female, Researcher, Lines 65 - 68)*

Saensook's account suggests that she is likely to hold the highest position in her research team as she holds a doctoral degree, while others hold a Bachelor's Degree or a Master's Degree, which also reflects that her colleagues have high expectations from her - including both academic and non-academic skills, e.g. observation of another member of the team's specialisation, planning skills, and

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interpersonal skills. It can be argued that Saensook has these skills due to her interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds when she lived in the UK. At the same time, the attempt to come up to other people's expectations can lead to the feeling of uneasiness, as in the case of Kanphlu since she thought she was not as good as other people think.

> *My colleagues, and people in general think I am intelligent, and that my English must be excellent. They also think I should know everything about my subject. This contradicts my beliefs as my English is not perfect, and I cannot speak in English like native speakers. I need time to think about grammar [when I speak in English]. I do not know everything about my subject as [the scope of] my research was narrow. (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 227 - 234)*

As reflected by Kanphlu, managing expectations seems to be challenging since Kanphlu may think it is difficult to come up to other people's expectations when a person gets a PhD. It seems that she rejects a compliment when she said "this contradicts my beliefs." Her extract also demonstrates that the people in general view a person with a doctorate as being more intelligent than a person without a doctorate. This notion seems to be unrealistic from Kanphlu's point of view. Consequently, other people's expectations of Kanphlu increased her feeling of uncertainty, which is reflected by a photograph of a pair of shoes. As it was noted in the reflexive diary, this photograph is quite interesting as the pair of shoes reflected that Kanphlu questioned herself about the direction of her research after completion of her PhD.

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Figure 5.9 Uncertainty about my research direction (Kanphlu)

There is an increase in others' expectations of me. So I selected this photograph as it shows that I have to keep stepping forward, but I ask myself how I can walk without falling down …. (Lines 227 – 229) … my supervisor used to tell me to define my research direction or research area, and I am still searching for it. I wonder if I have to run, walk or step in the same place …. (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 238 –240)

The verbatim quote from Kanphlu demonstrates her tension when she said "I am still searching for it" as she was uncertain about her research area. The quote implies that conducting research is an important part of her academic career. This is because Thai university lecturers are required to conduct research in order to publish research papers as one of the main job requirements and the criteria for annual performance evaluation (Phothongsunan, 2016). Further, Kanphlu's account also reflects the pressure of being a scholar to find the research area that a person has to specialise in. As a result, this pressure mounts on Kanphlu and may cause confusion about the direction in which her research should go. Kanphlu uses the metaphor of falling down to describe a situation in which a person falls short of other's expectations. This also makes her put effort into finding her research area where she uses the metaphor of walking. However, this metaphor for keeping walking is likely to be contradictory as it is difficult for Kanphlu to walk or even run since she has not found the focus of her study yet. In addition, the comparison

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with the action of stepping "in the same place" could mean not making progress in her career since she is still unable to find her research area. Another account of Tonnam demonstrated that his colleagues may hold high expectations of him since he got all his degrees, i.e. from a bachelor's degree to a doctoral degree, in the UK and studied the two main principal branches of the discipline.

> *My [educational] background is quite strong compared with my other colleagues. (Lines 70) ... I feel that they [my colleagues] expect me to work as they want... I feel pressured. (Lines 68) ... some colleagues pursue their own studies; some are sick or resigned. So they [other colleagues] expect me to fill in the gap, which includes a replacement for these colleagues who are absent. Of course I am not good at teaching every subject, but I have to [teach], to make them feel happy. (Tonnam, Male, Lecturer, Lines 74 - 76)*

There is a similarity between Tonnam and Kanphlu's accounts since they reflect that having a PhD does not guarantee PhD holders can know everything about their discipline. From Tonnam's account, he perceives that his colleagues may have higher expectations of him than other people's expectations of Kanphlu, and this has two implications. First, it can be due to his graduation from the UK from bachelor to doctorate degrees. Second, due to Tonnam's perceived strong educational backgrounds, his colleagues make the assumption that he can teach every course in his area very well which makes him teach the course of other colleagues who are absent or the course that he does not specialise in. Tonnam's account may also reflect the state of liminality of threshold concept as he has to read new books or articles that are not his academic area. Consequently, he may have to spend long hours understanding the content or jargon, and this can be similar to the difficulties that PhD students face during their doctoral studies. Moreover, living up to his colleagues' expectations poses a challenge to him to keep a work-life balance. His following quote shows a situation where he tried to allocate his time to plan the wedding ceremony.

> *... I worked from home from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon to prepare teaching materials. Then from five o'clock in the afternoon to ten o'clock at night I spend time*

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thinking about [planning] the wedding ceremony ... (Tonnam, Male, Lecturer, Lines 84 – 85)

Tonnam's account above is an attempt to allocate his time for both his academic work and his personal life. Arguably, this skill is similar to the professional skills that participants in this study used when they lived and studied in the UK studying for a PhD - conforming with the new culture in the UK and adapting themselves to manage their colleagues' expectations of them when returning to Thailand. Concerning the social aspect, living up to other people's expectations of participants can have a negative impact on participants' social relationships. For example, due to their colleagues' expectations, participants are likely to spend a lot of time preparing teaching material for the courses that they are asked to teach which sometimes include a course that they do not specialise in. This means Tonnam has to spend hours of his day finding and reading books or articles on the field that he is not expert in and understanding content as well as creating PowerPoint slides for teaching materials. As a result, he perceived that he did not have enough time for his family and friends. High expectation of participants' colleagues suggests that participants are regarded as a group of people who have good education and this offers opportunities for being assigned an important task in participants' institutions and organisations. Although some of them are pressured into living up to their colleagues' expectations, such pressure can arguably give them the opportunity to learn to manage their emotions, broaden their knowledge and improve their ability to work.

2.2 The Capacity to Re-adapt to Work

The capacity of participants to re-adapt to their work demonstrates that they learnt how to accommodate their employers' requests, which sometimes differ from what they learnt and the way they conducted research in the UK. Although there are very few participants who pointed out this aspect, it appeared continuously in their verbatim quotes. Saensook mentioned this aspect during the interview. She works as a researcher in a Thai governmental organisation and her work involves the evaluation of the governmental programmes and policies. Her

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following verbatim quotes show different practice of conducting research when she did her PhD and when she works for the organisation.

> *When I undertook a PhD, I discussed the literature and theories with my friends. However, when I evaluated* [governmental programmes and policies], *they* [people in authority] *do not want to know about the theory that I will use.* (Lines 99 – 101) ... *I did not have time to review the literature ... when a project is being done, I had to submit the results the following month. ... So I have to find a balance [between my study and my work]...* (Saensook, Female, Researcher, Lines 102 – 104)

Saensook emphasises the different practice of conducting research when she said "when a project is being done, I had to submit the results the following month." This suggests that she could not adhere to similar practice of conducting research as she used to do when she undertook a PhD, i.e. spending less time reviewing literature, due to the request from her employer. Furthermore, her quote suggests that the request of Saensook's employer puts pressure on her as she has to work against time to submit the results of the study quickly when the project is complete. The following photograph taken by Saensook emphasises this point.

Figure 5.10 Different practice of conducting research (Saensook)

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This is a meeting. I took this photograph after I collected data for the first project that I worked on after my return to Thailand ... . When I undertook a PhD, my friends and I had a similar educational background, and we had one goal, which was to conduct research. However, when I came back, my job was to evaluate [governmental programmes and policies]. So work and study are not the same. (Saensook, Female, Researcher, Lines 87 - 91)

When Saensook said "when I undertook a PhD, my friends and I had a similar educational background", it implies that her colleagues in Thailand are different from her as she and her friends have a similar goal, i.e. conducting PhD research. She then changed her thoughts that conducting research when working differs from conducting research during the PhD period. It means that she understands her employer's expectation, i.e. submitting the results of research she conducted shortly after the end of the project. This shows Saensook's capacity to re-adapt to work to accommodate her employer's request for the results of the project soon after the project finishes. This could be one of the benefits she gained when living and studying in the UK as she could employ her skill in learning to adapt herself to the new environment in Thailand. The capacity to re-adapt to work is also echoed by Wanmai who adapted her research approach to suit the local area where she lives.

... I conducted a study on yoghurt [in the UK]. Now it is about Thai germinated brown rice ... (Lines 171 - 172) My research style changed from a project that used a high level of technology to one that is suitable for a developing country like Thailand ... (Lines 169 - 170) The production [of food] in the UK relies on machinery, but here [in Thailand] it relies on human labour ... (Wanmai, Female, Lecturer, Line 185)

Wanmai's account shows a shift in research approach from conducting research that needs the use of technology to conducting research on local and place-based issues, i.e. from a study of yoghurt to Thai germinated brown rice. Her quote demonstrates the requirement to re-adapt to work since she conducts research

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on a local topic instead of sticking to the same approach of conducting research that is confined to the use of technology. This is because her PhD research in the UK was concerned with the use of machines to manufacture yoghurt in a factory, contrasting with her current research on Thai germinated brown rice that involves human labour, i.e. local farmers. Wanmai selected the following photograph of the site of her current research.

Figure 5.11 Working with local people for my research (Wanmai)

… My [PhD] research did not need involve me working with others, since it was about creating a mathematical model … However, this [my research in Thailand now] requires interaction with local people. The first challenge is the language. I have to be able to communicate with them as I originally come from Bangkok … (Wanmai, Female, Lecturer, Lines 164 - 167)

Wanmai's photograph depicts her attempt to adapt herself to work with local people, especially paddy farmers, to be able to understand them as they speak another dialect. Interestingly, her quote implies that adaptation not only happen with Thai international PhD students who live and study in the UK, but also occurs even in a person's homeland following their four or five years in another country, in this case after pursuing a doctoral education. In Wanmai's case, living and working in a new place in Thailand can pose a challenge to her to understand the

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local dialect, and this again requires her adaptation to be able to communicate with local people. It can be argued that Wanmai could transfer lessons learnt from her experiences when she was in the UK to adapt herself to working and communicating with local people in Thailand. Saensook and Wanmai's accounts have similarities in terms of participants' attempts to apply their knowledge they gained while studying for a PhD in the UK to the suitability for their current work in Thailand. Additionally, their accounts suggest that living and studying in the UK bring benefits to them as they could employ their experiences of their adaptation in their lives abroad to work for the institution or the organisation upon their return to Thailand.

3. Social networks

3.1 Re-establishing connections with old friends

Being able to be back in touch with old friends again after living and studying abroad for a number of years is a happy experience for many of the participants. The statements of Kanom below express her joy when she played a board game with her old friends (see Figure 5.12).

Figure 5.12 A board game, the bond between Thailand and the UK (Kanom)

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It is a board game… it is similar to a bridge that connects [my life in Thailand and the one in the UK] … When I was in [a city in the UK], I played a board game with my non-Thai flatmates. I liked it and enjoyed this kind of lifestyle. So when I returned to Thailand, my old friends like playing to [even though], they never played it before. … Playing the board game reminds me of when I was in Scotland. …(Lines 137-143) [Playing the board game] is like a bridge that connects my feelings. (Kanom, Female, Lecturer, Line 158)

The text in the extract indicates social interactions linking across Thailand and the UK, i.e. links between Kanom's non-Thai flatmates and her old Thai friends, through the board game. Further, the metaphor of the bridge accentuates this transnational network, and this type of social activity implies that Kanom can reconnect with her old friends after living abroad for many years. Interestingly, playing the board game also suggests that Kanom managed to maintain having her lifestyle as the one she used to have when she studied for a PhD in the UK, and this is similar to Kanphlu who keeps her lifestyle by baking cake as she used to do when she was in the UK. This reflects their belonging to the UK as it tends to make them feel that they can do an activity that they used to do when they lived in the UK. Another participant, Plaifah, also reported that she continued to run - a physical activity that she did in the UK and continues to do this activity with her old friends in Thailand. Her following photograph and account further illustrate this point.

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Figure 5.13 Running, reconnecting with old friends (Plaifah)

This photograph was taken … when I took part in a mini marathon (Line 141, 143) … I participated in a charity run once when I was in [a city in the UK]. Then when I returned [to Thailand], I aimed to run in a marathon … I spoke to a friend whose boyfriend likes running, and they asked me to join them. I took part in a Fun Run and met old friends by chance who I had not met for the last 20 years. They were old friends from high school … (Plaifah, Female, Researcher, Lines 145-150)

What is interesting in Plaifah's photograph is when she bowed down to show respect for a model of the late King Rama IX in a running event. It can be interpreted that Thai cultural value of status and respect is strongly embedded in her personality though she was exposed to Western cultural value of equality. The way that Plaifah bowed down is because she would like to express her heartfelt thanks to the late King who had devoted himself to the happiness and well-being of Thai people (see Paribatra, 2003). Additionally, there is a similarity between Kanom and Plaifah's accounts as they retain their old friendship circles. Further,

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Plaifah's account suggests that she may feel that she can maintain her lifestyle like the one she used to have when she studied for a PhD in the UK. However, being back in touch with old friends does not occur in the case of Kaohorm. His following account further explains this point.

> *Before going to the UK, I had many close friends at church. However, when I returned [to Thailand], they had their own families, so I rarely speak to them. (Line 90) Everything changes a lot... we are not close [anymore]. (Kaohorm, Male, Lecturer, Lines 99-100)*

Kaohorm's extract implies that he feels lonely as the friendship with his old friends has changed after his return to Thailand. This is because some of his close friends have started families and developed new close friendships. Additionally, Kaohorm's account implies that Thai PhD returnees tend to experience change in friendships more than Thai Postgraduate taught returnees as the former left their old friends longer than the latter. Consequently, Thai PhD returnees may face more challenges of catching up and re-establishing connections with their old friends than Thai Postgraduate taught returnees who have left for a shorter time period. Kaohorm and Kanom's cases are similar in terms of feeling left out when they are in a group of their Thai friends due to a different lifestyle and different conversation topics where Kanom, for example, cannot find anyone within her own social circle with whom she can discuss British politics.

3.2 Expanding social ties

Apart from reconnection with old friends, participants sought out a range of networks upon their return, including networks of other Thai PhD returnees who had studied at the same university in the UK. The following quote of Kanphlu supports this aspect.

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Figure 5.14 Having a meal together, being affiliated to different networks
(Kanphlu)

*This is when I was in a restaurant. (Line 154) ... This photograph
was taken when I had a get-together with friends for a meal. We
met and talked (Lines 162-163) ... They are my old friends from
University, high school and Scotland. So we met and had a meal
together (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 169-170).*

The extract from Kanphlu contrasts with Kaohorm's account as Kanphlu manages
to maintain her friendship with her old friends while Kaohorm faces a challenge
of reconnecting with his old friends. Concurrently, connecting with other Thai
alumni who got a PhD from the UK enables Kanphlu to share similar experiences of
living in the UK with others. As a result, this helps her to feel a bond with other
Thai PhD returnees who had similar experiences of living and studying in the UK.
However, although returning to Thailand seems to be a happy experience for
participants, some of them reported sadness at leaving the UK, and Kanphlu is one
of them.

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I did not want to return to Thailand, as I had settled down really well [in the UK] and I considered it another home, and I knew local people there [in the UK] … (Lines 43-44) These people were my supervisors, my Thai friends [in the UK], and Scottish people that I met at church [in the UK] (Lines 51) I converted to Christianity during my PhD … (Kanphlu, Female, Lecturer, Lines 53-54)

When Kanphlu compares the UK with another home, it implies that she may have a deep bond with the UK and reflects her sense of being at home in more than one place, i.e. in Thailand and the UK or a sense of double belonging. This is because she knew many people, and she developed networks of support and friendship during a PhD. It can be seen that Kanphlu's networks spanned connections to affiliations with groups in the UK, i.e. in Thailand and her integration into a religious group. Another participant, Nithi, goes into detail about a get-together with other Thai alumni after their return to Thailand.

Figure 5.15 Links after graduation (Nithi)

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I selected this photograph because I missed a group of friends who had similar experiences of life [a city in the UK] to me … I met them, and we ate snacks and talked. We drank beer and wine. The party is similar to the ones we had when we lived in a flat. I liked this very much. … this way of having a party like this is similar to those we used to have when we were there [in the UK]. (Nithi, Male, Lecturer, Lines 159-164)

A closer reading of Nithi's account suggests that he is filled with happiness when he met other Thai PhD returnees who had studied in the same university in the UK. This gives him great delight to recall the experiences of living and studying in the UK. Interestingly, he mentioned twice that this type of party was the same as the one that he and his friends used to have. This suggests that spending time doing this kind of activity with other Thai PhD returnees enables him to maintain his lifestyle as the one he used to have when he met other Thai returnees, i.e. drinking beer and wine - something that he rarely does with his Thai friends.

Participants' accounts indicate their multiple links with other people, i.e. their old friends and other Thai alumni, upon their return to Thailand. These links were reflected when they continued with the activity that they used to do when they lived in the UK with their friends. Their accounts also echo their deep bond with the UK when they recalled their friendship with local people during a PhD.

5.8 Discussion

The findings of this study discuss the impact of the changes in the cultural identity of Thai international PhD participants as a result of their exposure to a different culture when they lived and studied in the UK. The majority of participants showed how they became independent, managed to learn to be adaptable to both life in the UK and in Thailand, as well as develop their critical thinking through their experience of undertaking a PhD abroad. They then employed these skills in various capacities either in an institution or organisation, e.g. leading a research team, providing training and publicising the Department, having one's own course and designing the course to teach, understanding and working in line with

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employers' expectations and adapting a research topic to be suitable for a Thai context. At the same time, these changes pose a challenge to them due to their acquired habits of debate and criticism and questioning Thai cultural values or not calling older people by their first name. Consequently, they were viewed as aggressive and alienated from other Thais who prefer not to criticise others' perspectives. Equally, the findings strongly suggest that Thai cultural values of status and respect are deeply embedded in the personality of some participants despite their exposure to Western cultural value of equality. It is suggested that participants who both retain their sense of Thai cultural identity and are aware of these cultural differences may face less challenges in relation to re-adaptation to Thai culture upon their return to Thailand than those whose sense of Thai cultural identity has radically evolved. In terms of challenges in the workplace, participants tended to deal with high expectations of their colleagues in their institutions or organisations upon their return to Thailand. Concerning social aspects, participants maintained a friendship with their old Thai friends and other Thai PhD returnees. These findings can answer the following research questions.

1. How do Thai international PhD returnees perceive their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, their academic development and personal changes?

The findings of this research demonstrated that living and studying in the UK brought about personal changes of participants as they became an independent person. The literature on international students' experiences of studying and living in the UK consistently points to becoming an autonomous and independent person (Brown, 2009b; Gill, 2007; Gu, 2011; Liu and Winder, 2014; Tarry, 2011) regardless of the length of the student's programme of study and arguably more so for doctoral education, which generally took either four or five years for the study participants. This is possibly due to the need to survive in a foreign country as individuals having to deal with living in an unfamiliar environment and other difficulties without their family assistance, e.g. language difficulties, homesickness, sense of loss of being in the home environment (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). Further, living in the UK for several years for a PhD enables some participants to develop their critical thinking skills and became a critical thinker.

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This is due to the different view of the self as Western cultures attach importance to the self as an autonomous and independent person, whereas Eastern cultures place emphasis on an interdependent entity (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The view of the self in Western culture leads to independent thought, action or critical thought compared to the self-restraint thought and action in Asian cultures (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In Western cultures, one is independent from others; it, therefore, tends to be more common for people in the West to question the ideas of others and express doubts (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). Doddington (2007) illustrates that teachers take responsibility for promoting and strengthening students' capacity for critical thinking in Western educational contexts. However, Asian cultures emphasise the importance of face-saving and harmonious relationships with others (Robinson-Pant, 2009). Thus, taking a critical stance is considered to threaten a harmonious social order in Asian cultures (Merriam and Kim, 2008), particularly in Thailand. When participants came to live and study in the UK, the influences from these Western cultural values are likely to have an impact on their thoughts and behaviour and somehow contribute to these changes. Additionally, a participant questioned Thai cultural value of status and respect for senior people. According to Hofstede, Thailand subscribes to high power distance values, meaning that inequalities are accepted by people in the society, whereas the UK tends to embrace low power distance. Thus, it is likely that the exposure to British culture could lead to their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity. This, in turn, may enable other Thai people to think that participants disrespect senior people or even misinterpret this behavior as a form of aggression. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that participants become independent scholars as they are able to make their own decisions on their academic work in the areas they specialise in and conduct research on a local topic. This could be the learning outcomes at a doctoral level which stresses the importance of the ability to work independently, make decisions independently (Brodin, 2016) and make an original contribution to knowledge (Lovitts, 2005). This academic development strongly reflects the transition to a new professional role of participants from PhD students to independent researchers - the shift from a course-taker or a consumer of knowledge to an independent scholar or a producer of knowledge (Lovitts, 2005, p.138).

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(1.1) What are the challenges that Thai international PhD returnees face when they repatriate in terms of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions?

Living with participants' parents again after returning to Thailand can pose a challenge to some of them as they had already become used to living independently while in the UK. This shows the development of their independence from their parents which is likely to be influenced by Western cultural value or individualist cultures. In Western cultures, individuals prioritise self-reliance (Triandis, 2001) and children are expected to leave their parents' home when they can live on their own (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). However, this cultural value contrasts with collectivistic cultures, e.g. Thai culture, as individuals are protected by their in-groups (i.e. their families) (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), and asserting independence from parents is seen to be "threatening the stability of a community he or she belongs to" (Nah, 1999, p.18). This notion correlates with Thai cultural belief in "bunkhun" or "an indebted goodness" (p.168) which means a psychological bond of a person who does a good thing for another person in return since the latter provided needed help and favour for the former (Raktham, 2008). Thus, Thais should express their deeply indebted gratitude towards their parents as their parents bring them up (Suksomboon, 2009). Consequently, Thais have respect for their parents and live with and look after them (Suksomboon, 2009). However, one can also argue that children's duties to look after their elderly parents are due to Thai government's failure to provide enough social security and welfare systems for the elderly (see Knodel and Teerawichitchainan, 2017). Arguably, the idea that Thai children are unlikely to fail to meet this moral obligation, i.e. the moral indebtedness to their parents, is due to feeling afraid of facing negative psychological consequences, i.e. to be ungrateful or "akatanyu", which can be regarded as reprehensible and lead to committing a sin (Klausner, 2000). According to religious belief in Thailand, avoiding committing a sin may lead to having a fortunate life or rebirth of the spirit to be an angelic being who lives in heaven (Saiyasak, 2006). This element of implicit social control may be attributed to participants' attempts to live with their family again to avoid threatening Thai cultural belief in indebtedness

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towards their parents. Moreover, the findings of this research demonstrate that some participants adopted a critical attitude during their doctoral research in the UK. However, this change poses a challenge to them when they return to Thailand as debate and speaking frankly are not likely to be emphasised in Thailand. According to Mockler (2013), in cultures where rank and position are regarded as important, such directness is likely to be impolite. Therefore, preserving ambiguity and indirectness are used to maintain harmony, show respect and save face (Mockler, 2013), contrasting to Western cultures that attaches importance to debate and criticism (Van Egmond, Kühnen and Li, 2013). Another challenge is the different conversation topics that pose a challenge to a participant when she returned to Thailand as the participant cannot find a person who she knows to discuss British politics. This may be because such a conversation topic is not in the local news and may not have a direct impact on the lives of other Thai people. Arguably, a possible cause of participants· challenge of their re-adaptation to Thai culture is likely to be their comparison and contrast of their life experiences and opportunities in Thailand with the ones in the UK. This is supported by the findings in Guarnizo's (1997) research as Dominican returnees from the United States compared public services in their home country with those in the US. Although this result of Guarnizo's research does not concern the aspect of cultural comparison with the US, it reflects the idea of a dual frame of reference that occurs when individuals return to their home country. This notion also reflects their sense of double belonging through their narrative of events from their home and host countries (Lam and Warriner, 2012). Golbert (2001) uses the word 'a bridge' (p.724) as a metaphor for the connection between home and host countries. Concerning participants' challenges in their institutions, their colleagues hold high expectations for them. These expectations can exert more pressure on participants than other academics who do not get a PhD abroad, especially the expectation of participants' colleagues that those who studied and lived abroad for a number of years should be very proficient in English. Additionally, the findings of this study can be used to extend the concept of liminality, a state of being stuck, of threshold concepts that occur even after receiving a PhD as a participant attempted to teach a course that is outside the participant's academic specialisation. Moreover, high expectations of participants' colleagues reflect the

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belief that studying abroad is superior to studying in Thai local universities and that studying abroad enables students to develop analytical and logical thinking and problem-solving skills (Tarry, 2008). Apart from academic responsibilities, e.g. teaching, conducting research and writing for publications (McAlpine and Akerlind, 2010) as the main responsibilities for academics, participants were often expected to take an important role and, in some cases, to lead the organisation, and these responsibilities extend beyond the academic area. Arguably, high expectations of participants' colleagues, e.g. taking on leadership at work, can give them opportunities to develop skills beyond the academic area. For instance, they can learn to communicate with other colleagues effectively, delegate the task to a person who is capable of doing the job and resolve conflict in the workplace.

(1.2) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience gained from their PhD studies in the UK when interacting with other people?

The findings of this study demonstrated participants' sense of being at home in more than one place. This awareness facilitates a range of bonds with others who have similar experiences. For Thai international PhD returnees, this might mean links with their old Thai friends, or, equally, links with the alumni of their foreign Alma mater after their return to Thailand. Vertovec (1999) adds that this awareness enables a person to connect oneself with others who share similar "routes" and "roots" (p.450). Routes, in this context, means individuals who have similar experiences of living and studying abroad, i.e. Thai PhD returnees' links with other Thai PhD returnees who received a doctorate from the same university in the UK as they have similar experiences of living and studying abroad. Roots are the links with their old Thai friends from high school and university in Thailand. This notion is also in accordance with Gu and Schweisfurth's (2015) findings that demonstrate international Chinese returnees' keeping in touch with their old friends and other Chinese returnees who had studied in the same British university. Vertovec (2009) state that these multiple links are marked by the attachment of "here" and "there" (p.6), i.e. Thai PhD returnees' links with their

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old friends and other Thai PhD returnees who had been part of their circle while they were in the UK.

(1.3) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience acquired during their PhD studies in the UK for their career advancement?

The findings of this study demonstrate that the participants in this study were adept at transferring their own 'new' research knowledge and skills within the local 'home' context. According to Choy, Li and Singh (2015), this is called "a way of pluralizing knowledge" (p.178) which means the inclusion of knowledge from other countries to investigate local discipline and practices in students' home countries. Consequently, this could contribute new perspectives and broaden knowledge of research practice in another context (Choy, Li and Singh, 2015). Specifically, this includes research that aims to increase the glutinous rice production in Thailand (see Srisompun, et al., 2013) and research on Thai teachers' perceptions of teaching their students awareness of different cultures in their English classrooms in Thailand (see Fungchomchoei and Kardkarnklai, 2016). Further, the results of this research demonstrate participants' abilities to cope with their employers or colleagues' requests, demands and allocation of work responsibilities, which may go beyond academic areas. This may be the benefit of studying abroad. Arguably, one does not have to go to the UK to acquire this skill, but the intensity of the experience of living and studying in a foreign country can accentuate this type of quality. This is because living and studying abroad forms an excellent basis from which individuals may be supported to be open-minded and tolerate others as a result of their interaction with other people from different cultural backgrounds and respect cultural differences (Orahood, Kruze and Pearson, 2004). Moreover, the findings of this study also reflect on participants' capabilities to become a researcher and an academic, i.e. conducting their own research, teaching and taking responsibilities that go beyond academic areas. Mantai (2019) regards these responsibilities as academic identities, which reflect roles and responsibilities including research activities and non-research practices, e.g. teaching and administration.

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5.9 Conclusion

The findings of this research have extended the understanding of international PhD returnees' perceptions of the evolved sense of their cultural identity as a result of their doctoral studies in the UK and its impact on the experiences of their re-adaptation to their home country. Additionally, the results point to dimensions of national culture proposed by Hofstede as a highly appropriate analytical framework. Following Hofstede (1980; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010), there is evidence from this research that strengthens the notion that rules, norms and social conventions of each nation differ from one another (Smith, Bond and Kagitcibasi, 2006). Consequently, such differences can have an observable impact on returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture. The findings imply that being unable to conform to Thai culture can lead to the challenge that participants face when re-adapting to Thai culture. This is because certain aspects of British culture cannot fit into Thai cultural values. For example, criticising Thai cultural value of status and respect can be misinterpreted as being an aggressive person. Although Hofstede's data have been questioned due to its invalidity within the context of 21st century, his work has been proved to be stable when replicated (see 3.3 Criticism and Support of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures). I argue that the validity of Hofstede's cultural dimensions can reinforce the idea that conforming to individuals' home culture is necessary for returnees to fit back into their own country and institutions. Moreover, the experiences of studying for a PhD in the UK enable participants to employ both their experiences and knowledge gained during their studies in the UK to be beneficial for their work in the institution or the organisation when they return to Thailand. These experiences and knowledge include leading a research team, becoming an independent academic in terms of designing a course, to teach based on expertise, and capacity to re-adapt to work to accommodate an employer's request and to conduct research by adapting the topic to be suitable for the Thai context. Finally, the findings of this study strongly suggest that an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity of participants following an educational experience abroad necessitates re-adaptation to the Thai context when they return to Thailand.

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This study provides benefits for British universities, Thai agencies, or Thai government organisations to think about possible support to mitigate the challenges that international Thai PhD returnees face upon their return to Thailand. This support embodies organising a pre-departure and re-entry orientation for Thai international PhD returnees before they return to Thailand (see 6.3 Practical Implications for more details). Further, alumni could take more active roles in organising events for former international returnees to share their experiences and challenges of returning to their home country (see 6.3 Practical Implications for more details) to help the current returnees function more effectively in their professional and personal lives over time. Additionally, this study raises awareness of the challenges awaiting international Thai PhD students when they will return to their home country. This study has limitations in extending its scope of the study to all international students due to its focus on international Thai PhD returnees (see 6.4 Limitations of the Body of Work for more details). Regarding further research, another interesting field would be to explore the perspectives of colleagues or family members of Thai international PhD returnees to gain other important views (see 6.5 Recommendations for Further Research for more details).

Chapter 6

General Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises and discusses the key findings of Study 1 and Study 2 and demonstrates the connection in relation to theoretical frameworks employed in this research study. It then begins with the proposed conceptual explanation based on Study 1 findings (see Figure 6.1). Its aim is to explore the role of Thai cultural identity and its impacts on academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK. It is then followed by the conceptual contributions from Study 2 that are represented in Figure 6.2. This figure illustrates the experiences of re-adaptation of Thai international PhD returnees to Thai culture and institutions or organisations as well as the distinct benefits of studying abroad after completing a PhD from the UK. Though the body of this work is not longitudinal, it offers insight into the many and hidden challenges faced by this cohort to deal with cultural and academic differences between Thailand and the UK as well as the challenges of re-adaptation to Thai culture that those educated abroad face upon their return to Thailand. Thus, this whole body of work leads to recommendations of some practical implications for agencies and organisations re: various ways in which they can support this cohort during their studies in the UK and upon their return to Thailand. Although the body of this work has its limitations, it can be argued that this research has helped elucidate the invisible, huge and complex gap in the context of a study sojourn and the necessity for re-adaptation to home culture. Finally, attention is drawn to raising recommendations for further research, practical utility of the key research findings and ending with a personal reflection on my research journey.

6.2 Conceptual Contributions

It is reported that international PhD students are likely to be vulnerable to poor mental health when they come to study in the UK due to the challenges to deal with different cultures between home and host country, less access to friends and

family support and different academic cultures (Metcalfe, Wilson and Levecque, 2018). This notion may offer an explanation for some Thai international PhD students' experience as they come from a very hierarchical culture, attach importance to group harmony and are not accustomed to taking an active role in their learning. Arguably, the challenges that this cohort face can be more complex due to language barriers when they study for a PhD in a foreign language. To investigate these issues, Study 1 addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Thai international PhD students perceive their cultural identity as they live and study in the UK?

(1.1) How does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity affect their academic acculturation and psychosocial adaptation?

(1.2) Does Thai international PhD students' sense of cultural identity evolve as a result of living and studying abroad? If so, how? What are the contributory factors to this?

The findings of Study 1 are represented diagrammatically in Figure 6.1.
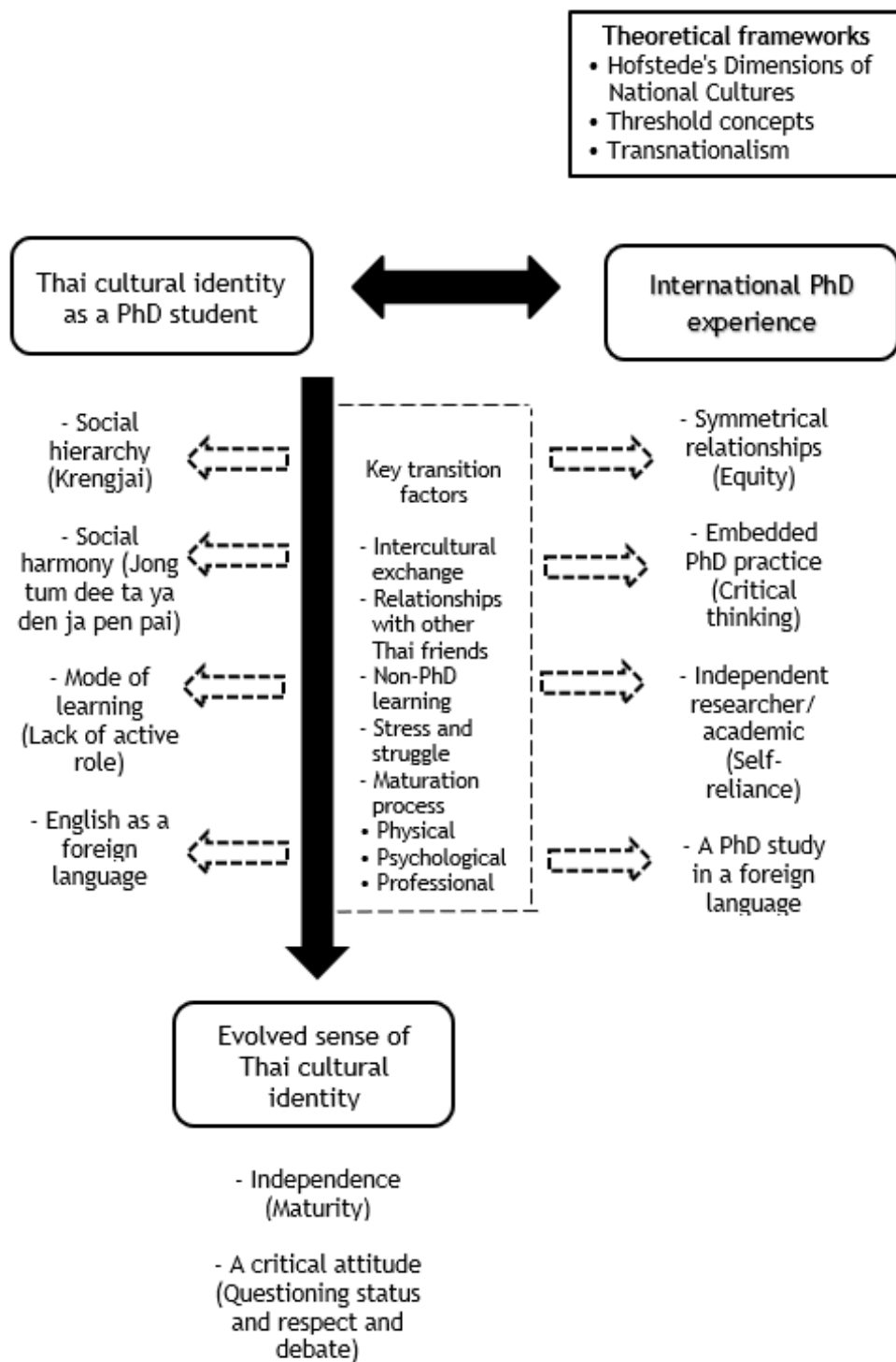
Figure 6.1 Study 1: The Impact of Thai Cultural Identity on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of Thai international PhD Students in the UK

As discussed in 4.4.2 Distinct characteristics of Thai cultural identity, Chapter 4, Thai cultural identity attaches very strong importance to social hierarchy (also referred to as the "Krengjai" attitude which means showing deference to a person with social superior) (Klausner, 2000) or teachers in this particular context. This cultural value seems to be at the opposite end of the continuum, i.e. Thai cultural identity where Thai international PhD students came from as illustrated in Figure 6.1. Thus, the "Krengjai" attitude usually leads to Thai students' feelings of being afraid of questioning the knowledge of Thai teachers. This is seemingly extended to their experience as international PhD students, which tends to contradict the general expectation from PhD students, i.e. to have a symmetrical relationship with their supervisor (Wang and Li, 2011). According to Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures (see Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), Thailand tends to be classified into a large Power Distance culture in which inequalities are likely to be accepted. Consequently, this Thai cultural identity can have an impact on Thai international PhD students when they study in the UK as they perceive that status and respect are not emphasised in the UK. Thai cultural identity of respecting teachers is likely to be incongruent with the interactions with their supervisors as they see that equity in the relationship in terms of power and the ability to assert views is underlined in the UK instead. This means that they can have a disagreement about a research project with a supervisor (see 3.1 Academic writing, Chapter 4 for more details). Consequently, this cultural difference enables participants to change their perception of status and respect or renegotiate their Thai cultural identity as part of the overall expectations concerning studying and living in a new cultural setting. Further, Thai cultural identity strongly subscribes to the value of social harmony which is demonstrated by the Thai words "Jong Tum Dee ta Ya Den Ja Pen Pai" or avoiding outshining others as it will bring harm to them (see 4.5 Theoretical Framework in Chapter 4 for more details). These words are likely to connect with Hofstede's (1980) Dimensions of National Cultures in terms of collectivism or the concept of having a strong sense of being a group member in exchange for being looked after by other group members. The research in Study 1 confirms that this value was strongly embedded in Thai students' personal disposition. Consequently, the participants involved in Study 1 are not encouraged to criticise others' opinions in order to prevent any form of offence to anyone. Likewise, it can be argued that

this strongly inhibits the development of critical thinking – a type of thinking that is central to undertaking doctoral education. The requirement for obtaining a PhD is to demonstrate critical thinking in a thesis, yet, this proves not to be in line with Thai cultural identity of social hierarchy and collectivism where building an academic argument could challenge Thai experts, teachers and academics. This challenge is also linked to two ideas. One is that the attempt to meet the requirements of obtaining a PhD tends to correlate with the notion of threshold concept – the time when PhD students are stuck which takes several years to overcome academic challenges to become a scholar (Kiley, 2009). At the same time, meeting PhD requirements coupled with cultural differences of hierarchy and collectivism mirror an invisible, huge and complex gap and add further complexity to the other challenges that this cohort already face as a result of deciding to study in the UK. Additionally, the findings of Study 1 demonstrate that Thai international students' previous mode of learning experience means that they may not be accustomed to verbal participation in a classroom. Again, this Thai cultural identity is likely to be deeply embedded in Thai international PhD students' learnt practice and may pose a challenge to them when studying for a PhD in the UK. A PhD expectation, on the other hand, inherently involves a process where PhD students are able to make their own decisions to carry out their research; this, in turn, leads them to becoming independent researchers (Brodin, 2016). However, this PhD requirement seems to be the direct opposite of that of the Thai educational system, which is more aligned to the teacher-centred approach. Consequently, Thai international PhD students may not be accustomed to taking an active role in their learning. The divergent academic traditions to which Thai international PhD students are exposed, e.g. different writing styles, limited English vocabulary and difficulty in grasping distinct accents (see 3.1 Academic writing and 3.2 Listening and speaking skills, Chapter 4 for more details) then raise various challenges for these Thai international PhD students. These challenges can further be exacerbated by the fact that Thailand has its unique script of non-Roman script with 44 consonant sounds and 15 vowels, and each word has its own tone, which has a different meaning depending on its characteristic tone (Slayden, 2019). For example, "Khun suwai" means "you are beautiful"; but if it is spoken with wrong intonation, it will also translate to "bad luck to you" (Cook, 2013). Thus, the linguistic differences between Thai and English language

make an already very challenging task even harder, i.e. meeting the requirements and completing a doctoral education in a foreign language for those who decide to study in the UK rather than pursue it in Thailand. Despite these challenges, there are key transitions that serve as a bridge to participants when their Thai cultural identity as a PhD student gradually evolves following their international PhD experience. These key transition factors involved: a) intercultural exchange or opportunities for social interaction with other international PhD friends, which led to learning other cultures and b) relationships with Thai friends as a source of emotional support. This social interaction with both Thai and international PhD friends as well as local people reinforces the concept of transnationalism (see 3.5 Transnationalism in Chapter 3 for more details) in terms of multiple ties with people in the UK and internationally. Ties with international PhD friends by and large, specifically lead to their personal development in terms of intercultural competence while ties with other Thai friends enable them to maintain their connection with their home culture. Consequently, these ties with other co-nationals in the UK can give participants emotional support in terms of reducing the feeling of homesickness when living far from Thailand. Such exposure to different cultures can be regarded as non-PhD learning, the third key transition factor – experiences outside academia – but is arguably crucial to their overall PhD learning journey. Although participants experienced stress and struggle, such experience is considered as the fourth key transition factor. This is linked to the fifth key transition factor that assists Thai international PhD students to grow physically, psychologically and professionally – referred to as the 'maturation process'. Taken together, this combined learning and living experience contributed to an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, i.e. an independent person who has adopted a more critical and questioning attitude.

The findings from Study 1 raise considerable challenges that Thai international PhD students face during their studies in the UK due to opposing cultural and academic characteristics between Thailand and the UK. This can be regarded as an invisible, huge and complex gap since Thai international PhD students' cultural identity and the requirements of conducting a PhD are conceptually situated at the opposite end of the continuum. Further, the language barrier brings an extra layer of challenges for this cohort during their doctoral studies in the UK.

Notwithstanding this challenge, there are key transition factors that serve as a bridge for this cohort towards a successful PhD completion, while contributing to an evolved sense of their Thai cultural identity. Yet, an evolved Thai cultural identity can also pose a challenge to them when they return to Thailand after completing their doctoral studies in the UK. It has been reported that international returnees face challenges of re-adaptation to their home culture, e.g. being accustomed to Western culture which is dissimilar to home culture (see 2.6.1 Challenges of Re-adaptation to Home Culture and Society in Chapter 2 and 5.3 Re-entry Challenges in Chapter 5). Further, there is the added challenge of re-adaptation to work in one's home country, e.g. high expectation of colleagues and sponsor in teaching and research as returnees are expected to apply skills and knowledge they gained abroad (see 5.3.2 Challenges of Re-adaptation to Work in Home Countries in Chapter 5 for more details). Moreover, studying abroad can also lead to personal changes, e.g. gaining independence (see 1.1 Independence in Chapter 5 for more details) and positive career outcomes of international returnees, e.g. an increase in their confidence in job applications, satisfaction with their salary (see 5.2.5 Positive Career Outcomes in Chapter 5 for more details). Exploring these issues further leads to addressing the research questions for Study 2:

1. How do Thai international PhD returnees perceive their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, their academic development and personal changes?

(1.1) What are the challenges that Thai international PhD returnees face when they repatriate in terms of their re-adaptation to Thai culture and their institutions?

(1.2) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience gained from their PhD studies in the UK when interacting with other people?

(1.3) How do Thai international PhD returnees employ the knowledge and experience acquired during their PhD studies in the UK for their career advancement?

Study 2 provides a continuation of Thai international students' journey after their return to Thailand with an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity. This is presented in Figure 6.2.
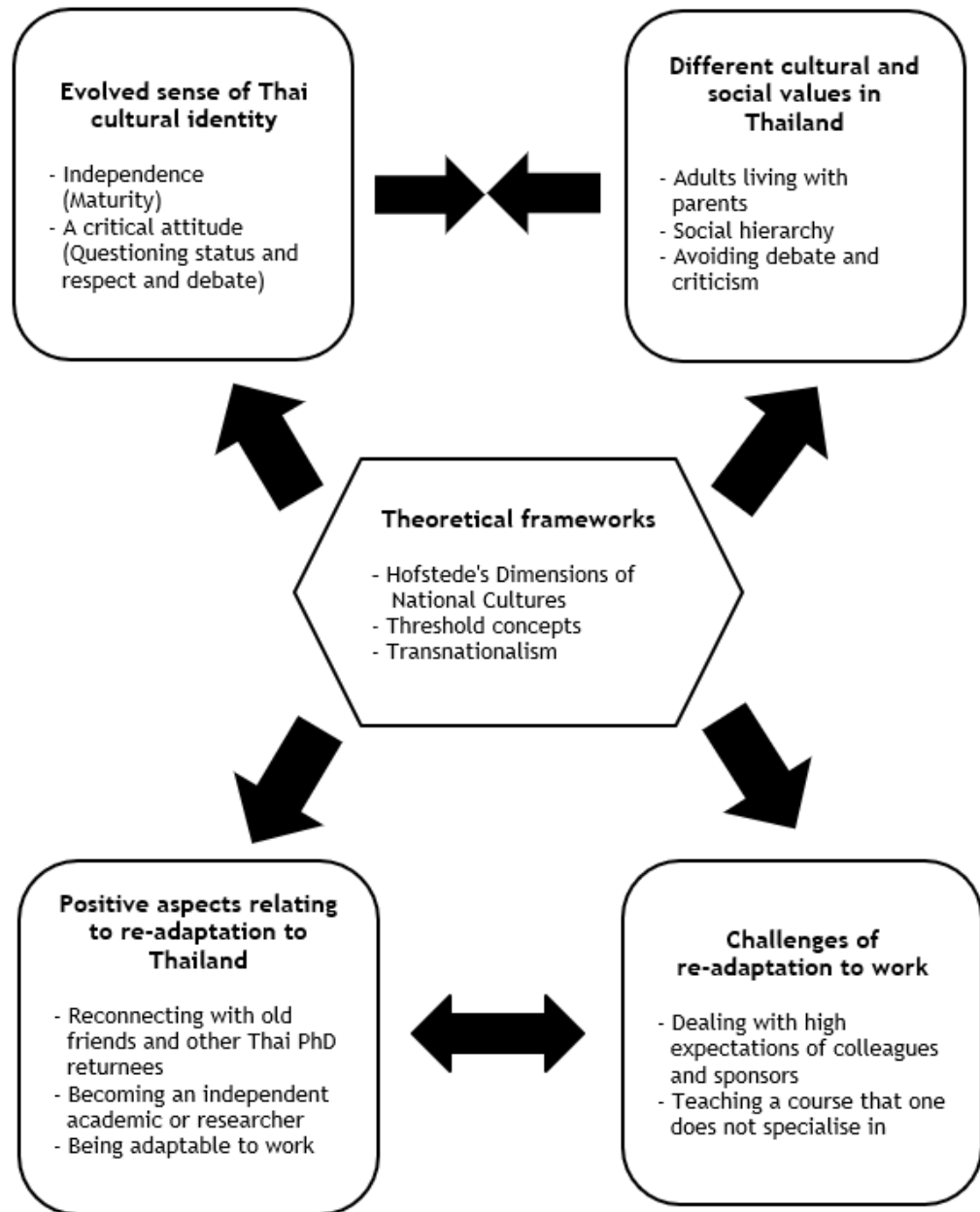

Figure 6.2 Study 2: Experiences of Re-adaptation of Thai International PhD Returnees from the UK

Upon returning to Thailand, this journey again posed a challenge to Thai international PhD returnees. Figure 6.2 presents what can be termed as cultural conflict due to the distinct changes in participants' personalities and attitudes as a result of living and studying abroad for many years, i.e. four to five years in the study participants' case. Often, at the point of return, they are already used to living their life independently in the UK. However, when they return to Thailand, they then have to live with their family again (see 1.1 Independence in Chapter 5 for more details). This then presents new challenges for these Thai returnees as some participants felt uncomfortable and thought that they lost their independence of living alone when they were faced with the obligation to live with their parents again. Moreover, being exposed to the cultural value of equity in the UK made some participants question Thai cultural identity of social hierarchy. For example, a participant remarked that Thai younger people cannot call older people by their first name, contrasting with norms in the UK where senior people can be called by their first name, and this made her feel that there was a barrier during interaction. According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) (see 4.5 Theoretical Framework in Chapter 4 for more details), Thailand and the UK greatly differs in terms of social hierarchy. To illustrate, British culture is likely to attach importance to equality whereas inequalities, respect and deference tend to be accepted in Thailand. Being exposed to a different culture is likely to evolve the Thai cultural identity of this cohort which has a huge impact upon their return to Thailand. As a case in point, participants' questioning status and respect of Thai cultural identity may lead other Thais to misunderstand and think that participants are disrespecting senior people. The findings of Study 2 also confirm that Thai cultural identity is unlikely to place emphasis on debate and criticism, contrasting to Western culture where debate and criticism should be fostered. However, because of living and studying abroad for many years, participants have greater confidence in expressing their opinions and conveying counter arguments with other people. This behaviour, on the other hand, also makes others think that participants have become aggressive, and that criticising other opinions or showing disagreements can threaten social harmony as it can make other people lose face. According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), Thailand's highly collectivist society means preserving social harmony is crucial, and this suggests that Thais are unlikely to be confrontational; this also means

saying "Yes" may not mean an acceptance or agreement. Despite these challenges faced by Thai PhD returnees, their experience during their PhD studies brings forth benefits in terms of forming relationships with other people and contributing to their career advancement and professional growth. Regarding their relationships with others, Thai international PhD returnees were able to reconnect to their old Thai friends by doing activities together. This reflects the idea of transnationalism, as a theoretical framework in this study, since international doctoral education characterises social interactions across Thailand and the UK, links between their non-Thai friends in the UK and their Thai friends in Thailand. Further, transnationalism was employed to explain a participant's link with other Thai PhD returnees who had studied in the same university in the UK. This implies that sharing the experiences of living and studying abroad with other Thai PhD returnees may enable participants to think that they do not lose their valuable experiences of living and studying in the UK. This tie also helps them to broaden their circle of friends and social contacts. In terms of career advancement, Thai PhD returnees can demonstrate that they have become independent academics or researchers, e.g. the ability to design their own courses based on their doctoral expertise. Moreover, participants were able to adapt themselves to their work in Thailand by transferring lessons learnt from their experiences in the UK, e.g. adapting to communicating with local people who speak the local dialect in a research project. However, participants faced challenges of re-adaptation to their work upon their return to Thailand. First, they had to deal with high expectations of their colleagues and sponsor as participants were expected to be able to teach every course, while another participant was expected to lead her research team. The high expectations of participants' colleagues reflect Thais' belief that the quality of overseas education is superior to the local one (Tarry, 2008). Thus, it is expected that Thai students who graduated abroad may be regarded as persons who have more knowledge and research skills than others who received a degree in Thailand. Secondly, as a consequence of the high expectations of colleagues and sponsor, a participant was expected to teach every course in his area very well and could replace his colleagues to teach their courses when they were absent. However, it was unlikely that he knew everything in this area, which means that he needed to spend time reading books and articles to understand the content. Following threshold concept, this finding extends the concept of

liminality or a state of being stuck of threshold concepts (see 2.5.2 Threshold Concepts and Doctoral Education in Chapter 2 for more details). Being a returnee shares similarities with being PhD students abroad as they previously faced this type of situation during their doctoral studies. The study finding strongly suggests that liminality also occurs even after a person has received a PhD, and in this case, returned to one's country. The findings of Study 2 demonstrate that both positive aspects and challenges co-exist among Thai international PhD returnees upon their return to Thailand. The challenges they faced imply that there is another part of the journey – an indication of further challenges as they re-adapt to their home country. This tends to stem from their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity as a result of being exposed to different culture for several years. As a result, ironic as it may sound, a re-adaptation to one's very own culture becomes inevitable due to their educational experience abroad. This finding implies that re-adaptation is a vital factor, which also needs to be considered for other international students, not just Thai international PhD students, who experienced studying and living in another country for a minimum of three years. To date, there is a dearth of empirical studies that explore re-adaptation of international students who return to their home country, particularly with a focus on the re-adaptation of international PhD returnees. To illustrate, the EBSCOHOST, when a huge multi-database search for peer reviewed and empirical studies on international students' re-adaptation to their home country was undertaken the result yielded only seventeen studies. This, however, does not count PhD theses. This suggests that there are gaps in the literature on international student returnees compared to a large number of studies on the adaptation of international students in the host country in Study 1 (approximately 110). It is probably the case that there is an oversight of the need to research international student returnees' experience since they are going back to their home country after all. However, as the research findings suggest, the evolved sense of Thai cultural identity at the end of international Thai PhD students' journeys becomes the beginning of another journey – that entails its own challenges – as they return to their home country. Arguably, Study 2 of this original body of work specifically aimed to explore the re-adaptation experiences of Thai international PhD returnees upon their return to Thailand in an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

This section demonstrates conceptual contributions of this body of work by following a combination of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures, transnationalism and the threshold concept to guide the investigation of this cohort's doctoral journey in the UK and the re-adaptation when they return to Thailand. The following section will demonstrate practical implications.

6.3 Practical Implications

Given the invisible, huge and complex gap between Thai international students' cultural identity as PhD students and their expected international PhD experience, the findings presented have a range of implications for Thai scholarship funders, British university agents and other agencies/organisations who encourage and support Thai international students to study in the UK. First, Thai institutions or organisations that encourage or support Thai international PhD students to study in the UK should consider organising a pre-arrival orientation to British culture and its learning and pedagogic mode for the students. Although the orientation is evidenced in activities organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology and Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) for Thai international students who won a scholarship from these Thai government organisations, this event does not include other Thai international PhD students, for example those who won scholarships from Thai universities. Such mixed orientation events are helpful for Thai international PhD students as it gives them opportunities to meet other students who will go to the same university in the UK. As a result, this enables and encourages them not only to come to the UK together, but more importantly, help each other, particularly during their initial period of time in the UK. This orientation differs from the International Welcome Programme provided by British institutions (e.g. Glasgow Caledonian University, 2019) to help and support international students when they arrive in the UK.

Similarly, in the same way that assistance is provided to international students as they enter a new societal context, it is also important if British universities, Thai agencies, or Thai government organisations could organise a pre-departure and re-entry orientation for Thai international PhD returnees before they return to Thailand to stress, for example, the challenges that re-adaptation to the home culture may entail. As far as the researcher knows, there is an organisation of

youth exchange and study, i.e. FLEX & YES, 2018, that organises a pre-departure orientation for high school exchange students who spend one academic year in the US before their departure for their home country. Further, another international youth exchange organisation, i.e. AFS India, 2018, organised a re-entry orientation for exchange students from India to reflect on their exchange journey and learn to cope with challenges when they return to India. In the case of FLEX and YES organisation, some problems that commonly occur when exchange students return to their home country are raised to prompt students to think about the ways they can deal with these challenges upon their return to the home country (see on p.14 of FLEX & YES, 2018). Arguably, this activity enables students to prepare if such situations happen to them and they can discuss with other students to exchange ideas of how to deal with the challenges. Some universities in the UK and the US provide information on travel arrangements for international students upon their return to their home country, e.g. sending belongings home and informing a landlord or University accommodation office about international students' departure for their home country (University of Bath, 2019). Additionally, they provide information on strategies for adapting to life after study abroad for American university students who participated in an exchange programme abroad, e.g. maintaining contact with friends that international students made abroad and studying a foreign language to enhance skills (University of Utah, 2019). However, these are all examples of practical assistance as international students prepare to go back home. This information does not cover issues specific to challenges of re-adaptation to work again as well as re-adaptation to one's home country. In this respect, contacting and asking previous international students who used to be in a similar situation could be advantageous. This can possibly be facilitated by organising a pre-departure and re-entry orientation for international students, as well as inviting former international returnees to share their experiences, including how they coped with the challenges when they eventually returned to their home country. Seemingly, the current role of alumni is focused on merely attracting new international students; their roles are seen to be more aligned with marketing purposes in order to persuade more international students to come to study in the UK. A particular example is Alumni UK network in China situated on the website of British Council to share their experience of studying in the UK (see British Council, 2019). Apart from these examples, it seems that there is a lack of

support from university agents and other agencies/organisations from either the home or the host country to provide support to this cohort, particularly in relation to when they return to their home country – something that has arguably been overlooked to date in understanding the pros and cons of international doctoral journey.

Further, the study findings reinforce the important implications for the university lecturers, supervisors and other university agents in increasing their understanding and awareness of international students' home culture (Brown and Brown, 2013; Choy, Li and Singh, 2015), which is, in this case, Thai cultural identity and academic culture. To achieve this aim, issues of culturally responsive teaching practices may possibly take a more central role in the professional development of Higher Education staff, especially since internationalisation is a priority for many Higher Education Institutions in the UK. Moreover, teaching and non-teaching staff from British universities may also be more cognisant of international students' different cultural identities and the academic cultures to promote familiarity when setting up academic writing courses intended to introduce the students to the structure, ways to demonstrate their critical thinking and develop their authorial voice in their writing and important language features for academic writing. In this suggested writing course, international PhD students are encouraged to share their short extracts from their own writing for the class discussion about key grammatical and vocabulary features of academic writing. The course will enable the students to learn and practice to write with more clarity and brevity based on their pieces of writing or the ones of other students. The writing course can also focus on looking at research papers published in peer-reviewed journals and successful doctoral theses so that the students can learn about structure and key language needed for each section in a doctoral thesis, ways to develop the argument and any other features of good academic writing. As far as the researcher knows, this type of supported academic writing has been offered at University of Reading (see University of Reading, 2019), but it has not been organised in other universities in the UK such as University of Glasgow. Finally, though there may be cultural and/or academic-related barriers, it is imperative for Thai international PhD students to think that studying and living in the UK gives them a great opportunity to do things differently and learn about

different cultures that studying in Thailand may not offer. Once they decide to embark on this challenging journey, it is arguably crucial that Thai international PhD students should take an active role in participating in academic workshops or social events or informal learning in order to meet other fellow PhD students. This could facilitate discussion of writing practices and other academic-related issues as well as meeting people from different cultural backgrounds. Doing so can potentially broaden their horizons and subsequently bridge the gap between Thai cultural identity as a PhD student and international PhD experience.

This section points out practical implications of this body of work. The following section will discuss its limitation.

6.4 Limitations of the Body of Work

This body of work is not without limitations. It is limited by the lack of generalisability to all international students because of its main focus to the Thai international student cohort. Nevertheless, some aspects of the findings of this body of work in terms of social hierarchy may apply to other international students and returnees who face similar challenges, and they can thus gain benefit from this research. As the focus of this study is Thai international PhD students and returnees, more research is needed to explore how the findings can be generalised to other groups of international students and returnees. For example, this includes the generalisation to international students from China as the largest group of non-EU students in the UK (UKCISA, 2019) or those from Malaysia due to its similar geographical regions, i.e. Southeast Asia and even international students from Africa or South America as the number of students from these continents ranks among the top fifteen non-EU sending countries in the UK (see Table 1.1 Number of international PhD students). As stated in the ethics application form, Study 2 participants were recruited via the Facebook site for Glasgow Thai Students Community. Study 2 employed telephone interviews via Facebook Messenger calling without webcams or the smartphone camera with some participants (see 5.6.3 Materials, Chapter 5 for more details). Some participants told the researcher that they felt uncomfortable to turn on the camera as they were in their private place, i.e. their home. Thus, it was not possible for the researcher to see the body language of interviewees, which could have added some non-verbal type of

information during the interviews. According to Bryman (2012), body language is regarded as a necessary tool for the interviewer to interpret interviewee's attitudes and feelings during the interview, e.g. discomfort, puzzlement or confusion. Mariampolski (2001) elaborates that if an interviewee tightly crosses arms or legs, it can be an indication of a defensive stance, discomfort or an underlying feeling. Thus, if an interviewer sees this kind of body language and is able to engender a rapport with the interviewee, the interviewee can relax and unclench the arms. However, conducting in-person interviews were almost impossible in Study 2 as participants were all based in different parts of Thailand. The researcher tried to overcome this limitation by noting the tone of voice of participants in a reflexive diary to compensate for the absence of the body language of participants. Finally, during the recruitment of participants of study 2, a potential participant declined to take part in the study. He told the researcher that he was unable to spend time selecting photographs as he was very busy at the time of the recruitment. Despite these challenges, this photo-elicitation interview method that was adopted for my research has proved to be of benefit to the research (see 5.1 Introduction, Chapter 5 for more details).

This section discusses the limitations of this original body of work and how the researcher overcame these limitations. The following section will demonstrate recommendations for future research.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research

With respect to further research in future studies, longitudinal studies can be considered in order to identify change over time of the same participants in terms of their adaptation when they were in the UK and their re-adaptation upon their return to Thailand. Another potentially interesting field for further research is to include supervisors' perspective concerning supervision of Thai international PhD students. Such studies, aimed to obtain their views on students' adaptation, are likely to provide complementary insights into the challenges of Thai international students' experience based on students' perspective. Future work could also aim to explore the perspectives of colleagues or family members of Thai international PhD returnees on their re-adaptation to living with their family again, Thai culture and organisations. These studies could provide other crucial views from those who

experienced the complexity of Thai international PhD students' journey both during their studies in the UK and upon their return to Thailand.

6.6 A Reflection on My Research Journey

The first time I learnt how to conduct research was when I did a Master's degree at a university in the UK. I loved doing a course on research methods and enjoyed conducting research for my Master's degree dissertation. Though it was a small project, this learning experience inspired me to study for a PhD to learn further to conduct in-depth research at a more complex level. After working as a lecturer for a few years, I won a scholarship from the university where I was working to follow my dream to conduct a PhD.

The first thing I realised after embarking on a PhD was the challenge of identifying the gap in the existing research in the area of intercultural education. After reading a number of papers, I finally decided to conduct this body of work as it reflects my experience as a Thai international student who did a Master's degree and a PhD in the UK. After I completed my data collection of Study 1, I thought that it was not very difficult to recruit research participants as all of the 15 participants were available for my interview. Further, it was quite convenient to conduct an interview with them as they lived and studied in the same town as me in the UK. Thus, I did not spend a lot of time traveling to conduct an interview. However, I faced a huge challenge when I started recruiting participants for Study 2. One of the major challenges was that potential participants were very busy during the time when I started my data collection. I started recruiting my participants in December, which was the busiest time for those who work as lecturers in Thailand as it was the exam period. Most of them were busy with setting questions, being an invigilator and marking tests. Consequently, though I needed only 15 participants, I had to find 43 participants overall to replace some potential participants who were unavailable for the interview due to their busy work schedule. This lesson taught me to have a back-up plan to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

To me, taking a qualitative approach was quite time-consuming as it included transcribing verbatim quotes and coding the data. Nevertheless, I found the

findings and the photographs of both studies fascinating as they gave me a lot of details of participants' experiences that I had never thought of. Moreover, having two studies gave me a great opportunity to develop my research skills, e.g. interview skills and my skill in data analysis. I learnt many things in Study 1, which helped to improve the quality of my work in Study 2. I think this is very important as undertaking each study is a part of a learning process. I feel I am very lucky to have very supportive supervisors who have guided me when I faced challenges during my study, and they are a role model for me to look up to, especially when I shall have my own PhD students when I return to work in Thailand. In addition to opportunities to develop my research skills doing a PhD, living and studying in the UK gives me a good opportunity to learn different cultures and interact with other people from different cultural backgrounds. This experience is an eye-opener for me. As time has gone by, I feel that I have become a strong and mature person as I have become more confident in facing and solving problems I have encountered in the UK. This ability is very important as I know that it will encourage me to deal with the challenges that await me when I return to Thailand. In particular, conducting Study 2 helped me tremendously to think about the experience that I am likely to encounter upon my return. As an example, I learnt from my Study 2 participants that high expectations from colleagues and their sponsor made them feel stressed. Equally, this gives them the opportunity to develop further and as a result, gain new skills and knowledge. This is beneficial not only for the returnees themselves, but also for the organisations or institutions where they are working. I will never forget this experience of living and studying in the UK for four years and I am looking forward to returning to Thailand. It will be a new chapter in my life!!!

6.7 Conclusion

This body of work demonstrated important findings of Study 1 and 2 in terms of the challenges of adaptation of Thai international PhD students in the UK and their re-adaptation upon their return to Thailand after completing their doctoral studies. In Study 1, there is an invisible, huge and complex gap between Thai cultural identity as a PhD student and the expected British PhD experience that poses a huge challenge to Thai international PhD students due to cultural differences and their attempt to meet PhD requirements in the UK. However,

these challenges lead to their physical, psychological and professional development as well as their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity. This evolved sense of Thai cultural identity plays an important role in their re-adaptation when they return to Thailand, which is explored in Study 2. It poses a challenge to them in terms of their interaction with other Thais and living with their family again. This reflects that adaptation is likely to be an ongoing process as it also occurs when international PhD students return to their home country. Despite these challenges, Thai PhD returnees are able to employ the knowledge and experiences they gained from conducting a PhD in the UK to be beneficial for their career and reconnecting with their old friends and expanding social ties with other Thai PhD returnees. Finally, this body of work brings benefit to other international PhD students who may have similar experiences, not only in terms of cultural differences between their home and host countries but also in terms of the academic challenges they encounter.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement of Study 1

Plain Language Statement

Title of Project: An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk **and Dr Kate Reid** - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before making your decision, it is important for you to understand this research. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask questions if you need to. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate international Thai PhD students' perceptions of their cultural identity. This research will explore how cultural identity influences Thai students' attitudes towards their general adaptation (including social and learning isolation issues) and academic acculturation as students in the UK. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of international Thai students' learning experiences in the UK, including the struggles and benefits for those who study outside Thailand.

Voluntary participation

This research phase will involve 15 international Thai PhD student participants from different academic areas and universities in Glasgow. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you are a Thai PhD student who is studying in Glasgow in the 2016-2017 academic year. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. If you refuse to agree to participate or discontinue participation at any time, it will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Research involvement

Part 1: Photo-taking task

You will be asked to choose existing digital photographs and/or to take photographs of items using your mobile phones (about 4 photos) representing Thai cultural identity. (Photo-taking is not meant to be obtrusive and can be done when convenient and within a period of one week.) In this research, 'cultural identity' refers to the symbols, values, norms and traditions that signify being Thai – an identity that is unique and set apart from any other culture. If you would like to take a photograph of a person and/or people, there will be a separate PLS and consent form for you to give to your photo subjects prior to taking photos. Items for consideration when taking photos will include objects representing or symbolising Thai cultural identity; adaptation to your living and studying experiences in the UK and academic acculturation (e.g. reflective thinking and reasoning, academic discourse) while studying for a PhD. (You will be given access to individual password-protected folders to store your photos situated within OneDrive – the University of Glasgow online repository).

Part 2: One-to-one photo-elicitation Interview

The interviews, which will be based on the photographs that you choose and/or take, will take a maximum of one hour, and the conversations will be audio-recorded. The discussion will focus on your perception of Thai cultural identity in relation to your personal and academic experiences as an international doctoral student.

Benefits and risks

The study will encourage personal reflection on your perception of Thai cultural identity and how it influences your adaptation while you are living and studying in the UK. Your contribution will help elucidate both a sound understanding of the role played by cultural identity in international students' overall experiences. The risks of this research are considered to be low. This research will be conducted in a quiet and private place on campus. No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked; I will immediately pause the interview if you do not want to continue. Interviews will be conducted in Thai, your native language, so that you will be able to feel more relaxed during the discussion. After the interview is complete, you will be given the chance to review your transcript and ask for any particular parts to be removed if you would like to. If you experience any possible distress during your doctoral studies, e.g. the feeling of loneliness and isolation, please find details of your University's International Support Team on your University website, which signposts relevant social and professional networks and services (e.g. University Counselling & Psychological Services). If you experience any difficulties in your studies, you may want to read the University Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees in conjunction with Postgraduate Research Handbook for Students and Supervisors of your university.

Confidentiality and usage of data

Pseudonyms will be used when referring you in any publications arising from this research. All the information collected will be kept securely to prevent identification of participants and photo subjects (i.e. if consent is limited to use of photos during interview only) arising from any aspect of the research. Any pertinent

information (e.g. name of your programme) that might compromise your anonymity will be concealed. Data will be stored at the University of Glasgow and at my personal address. Paper data will be kept securely in a locked room and electronic data can be accessed by password only. Personally-identifiable data and original audio-files will be permanently deleted from computers and any paper files such as consent forms will be shredded at the end of the project. The de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years. The de-identified research data will be used for a PhD thesis and possibly for further publications; this data might be shared or re-used in accordance with the Data Sharing Guidance. Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this is the case I will inform you of any decisions that might affect your anonymity.

Contact details

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. Please contact me at n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk for further information or the College of Social Sciences' Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston at Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk for any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project.

Appendix 2: Plain Language Statement of Study 2

Title of Project: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before making your decision, it is important for you to understand this research. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask questions if you need to. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine how an evolved sense of their Thai cultural identity affects the challenges of Thai international PhD returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and their institutions, ways to deal with the challenges, personal changes, academic development, career advancement and their forming relationships with other people. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of Thai international PhD returnees' experience in the UK, including their personal changes and academic development as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK.

Voluntary participation

This research phase will involve 15 Thai international PhD returnees of varying ages, fields of study and lengths of getting a PhD from universities in the UK. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you are a Thai international PhD returnee who completed your degree in UK universities in the last 5 years. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. If you decline to participate or discontinue participation at any time, it will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Research involvement

<u>Part 1: Photo-taking task</u>

You will be asked to choose existing digital photographs and/or to take photographs of items using your mobile phones (about 5 photos) representing your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic development, your forming relationships with other people, challenges of your re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and your institution as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK. (Photo-taking is not meant to be obtrusive and can be done when convenient and within a period of one week). In this research, 'cultural identity' refers to the symbols, values, norms and traditions that signify being Thai – an identity that is unique and set apart from any other culture. If you would like to take a photograph of a person and/or people, there will be a separate PLS and consent form for you to give to your photo subjects prior to taking photos. Items for consideration when taking photos will include objects representing or symbolising an evolved sense of Thai cultural identity: academic development, your relationships with other people (e.g. your improved command of English, development of critical thinking skills and understanding of people from similar and different cultural backgrounds), challenges of your re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and your institution as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK. (You will be given access to individual password-protected folders to store your photos situated within OneDrive – the University of Glasgow online repository). If you take a photograph of a person and/or people, please upload the signed consent form from photo subjects and store it in OneDrive.

<u>Part 2: One-to-one photo-elicitation Interview</u>

The interviews, which will be based on the photographs that you choose or take, will take a maximum of one hour, and the conversations will be audio-recorded. The discussion will focus on the evolved sense of your Thai cultural identity in relation to your re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and your institution as well as the benefits of UK educational experiences to your career advancement and relationships with other people.

Benefits and risks

The study will encourage personal reflection on your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity and how it affects your re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and your institution after your return to Thailand. Your contribution will help elucidate a sound understanding of the role played by cultural identity in the re-adaptation experience of Thai international PhD returnees. The risks of this research are considered to be low. Online interview conversations will be conducted in researcher's flat. No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked; I will immediately pause the interview if you do not want to continue. Online interview conversations will be conducted in Thai, your native language, so that you will be able to feel more relaxed during the discussion. After the interview is

complete, you will be given the chance to review your transcript and ask for any particular parts to be removed if you would like to. This is for validation purposes. If you experience any possible distress during or after the interview, e.g. feeling of not fitting back into Thai culture and/or Thai society and your institution practices, please find details of the available Counselling & Psychological Services which take place in hospitals, Psychiatric clinics, Institute of Psychiatry and a telephone hotline for mental health issues.

Confidentiality and usage of data

Pseudonyms will be used when referring you in any publications arising from this research. All the information collected will be kept securely to prevent identification of participants and photo subjects (i.e. if consent is limited to use of photos during interview only) arising from any aspect of the research. Any pertinent information (e.g. name of your programme) that might compromise your anonymity will be concealed. Data will be stored at the University of Glasgow and at my personal address. Paper data will be kept securely in a locked room and electronic data can be accessed by password only. Personally-identifiable data and original audio-files will be permanently deleted from computers (both in the office and at home) at the end of data collection. The de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years. The de-identified research data will be used for a PhD thesis and possibly for further publications; this data might be shared or re-used in accordance with the Data Sharing Guidance. Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this is the case I will inform you of any decisions that might affect your anonymity.

Contact details

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. Please contact me at n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk for further information or the College of Social Sciences' Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk for any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project.

Appendix 3: Plain Language Statement for Photo Subjects of Study 1

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

**Title of Project: An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk**

You are being invited to take part as photo subjects in a research project by a student of the School of Education, University of Glasgow. Before making your decision, it is important for you to understand this research. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask questions if you need to. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate international Thai PhD students' perceptions of their cultural identity. This research will explore how cultural identity influences Thai students' attitudes towards their general adaptation (including social and learning isolation issues) and academic acculturation as students in the UK. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of international Thai students' learning experiences in the UK, including the struggles and benefits for those who study outside Thailand.

Research involvement and voluntary participation

Research participants are international Thai PhD students who are studying in Glasgow in the 2016-2017 academic year. They are asked to take photographs (e.g. objects, places, people or anything) that represent their Thai cultural identity in order to examine its role in their personal

and learning adaptation experiences while living and studying in the UK, especially the ones that make a significant impression on them. In doing this task, they may approach you and ask for your permission to be included in the photograph. (If you agree, please ask for and sign the consent form.)

Please note that your participation as a photo subject is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. If you refuse to agree to participate or discontinue participation at any time, this will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Research publication and usage of data

Pseudonyms will be used when referring you in any publications arising from this research. All the information collected will be kept securely to prevent identification of participants and photo subjects (i.e. if consent is limited to use of photos during interview only) arising from any aspect of the research. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher will check whether there is the signed permission of your photographs being used during the interview. Any pertinent information that might compromise your anonymity will be concealed. The de-identified research data will be used for a PhD thesis and may be used for comparisons and further publications. The de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years.

Contact details

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. Please contact me at n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk for further information or the College of Social Sciences' Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston at Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk for any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project.

Appendix 4: Plain Language Statement for Photo Subjects of Study 2

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part as photo subjects in a research project by a PhD student of the School of Education, University of Glasgow. Before making your decision, it is important for you to understand this research. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask questions if you need to. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine how an evolved sense of their Thai cultural identity affects the challenges of Thai international PhD returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and their institutions, ways to deal with the challenges, personal changes, academic development, career advancement and their forming relationships with other people. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of Thai international PhD returnees' experience in the UK, including their personal changes and academic development as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK.

Research involvement and voluntary participation

Research participants are Thai international PhD returnees who completed their degrees in UK universities in the last 5 years. They are asked to take photographs (e.g. objects, places, people or anything) that represent their evolved sense of Thai cultural identity to examine its role in their

re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and their institutions after they return to Thailand, especially the ones that make a significant impression on them. In doing this task, they may approach you and ask for your permission to be included in the photograph. (If you agree, please ask for and sign the consent form.)

Please note that your participation as a photo subject is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. If you decline to participate or discontinue participation at any time, this will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Research publication and usage of data

Pseudonyms will be used when referring you in any publications arising from this research. All the information collected will be kept securely to prevent identification of participants and photo subjects (i.e. if consent is limited to use of photos during interview only) arising from any aspect of the research. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher will check that there is signed permission for your photographs to be used during the interview, in a PhD thesis, academic journals, conference presentations, conference papers, online research publications and books. Any pertinent information that might compromise your anonymity will be concealed. The de-identified research data will be used for a PhD thesis and may be used for comparisons and further publications. The de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years.

Contact details

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. Please contact me at n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk for further information or the College of Social Sciences' Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk for any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project.

Appendix 5: Consent Form of Study 1

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Please read following information carefully and complete the form.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonyms.

4. I am aware and consent to my photographs being used as a stimulus for interviews.

5. I am aware and consent that my photographs might be used in academic journals and conference papers.

6. I consent to interviews being audio-recorded. (I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

7. I agree that the data collected in the course of this research will be shared with other genuine researchers as set out in the Plain Language Statement and the de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years.

8. I understand that data will be safeguarded and stored to prevent identification of participants and photo subjects (i.e. if consent is limited to use of photos during interview only) arising from any aspect of the research.

9. I give consent: *(Please tick all that apply.)*
☐ to my photographs being used during the interview
☐ to my photographs being used for wider public dissemination
☐ for research data held for 10 years in accordance to the University Code of Good Practice in Research - http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant   …………………………………… Signature   ………………………………………………….
Date …………………………………

Name of Researcher   …………………………………… Signature   ……………………………………………..….
Date …………………………………

Appendix 6: Consent Form of Study 2

Title of Project: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk **and Dr Kate Reid -**
Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Please read following information carefully and complete the form.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to interviews being audio-recorded. (I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)
4. I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
5. The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
6. The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.
7. The material, i.e. interview data and photographs taken by participants, will be used in a PhD thesis and may be used in academic journals, conference presentations, conference papers, online research publications and books.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant …………………………………………………. Signature
…………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Name of Researcher ………………………………………………. Signature
…………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Appendix 7: Consent Form for Photo Subjects of Study 1

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Please read following information carefully and complete the form.

1. I am 18 years old (or older) and am able to give consent.

2. I give consent to be photographed as part of 'An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students' research study.

3. I am aware and consent to my photographs being used as a stimulus for interviews with the researcher.

4. I am aware and consent that my photographs might be used in a PhD thesis, academic journals, conference presentations, and online research publications.

5. I am aware that the de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years.

I give consent: *(Please tick all that apply.)*
☐ to my photographs being used during the interview
☐ to my photographs being used for wider public dissemination
☐ for research data held for 10 years in accordance with the University Code of Good Practice in Research - http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/

Name of Person Photographed …………………………………………

Signature   ……………………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………

Name of Researcher   …………………………………………

Signature   ……………………………………………...…..

Date ……………………………………

Appendix 8: Consent Form for Photo Subjects of Study 2

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk **and Dr Kate Reid -** Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Please read following information carefully and complete the form.

1. I am 18 years old (or older) and am able to give consent.

2. I give consent to be photographed as part of 'Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees' research study.

3. I am aware and consent to my photographs being used as a stimulus for interviews with the researcher.

4. I am aware and consent that my photographs might be used during the interview, in a PhD thesis, academic journals, conference presentations, conference papers, online research publications and books.

5. I am aware that the de-identified research data will be stored for up to 10 years.

   I give consent: *(Please tick all that apply.)*
   ☐ to my photographs being used during the interview
   ☐ to my photographs being used for wider public dissemination
   ☐ for research data held for 10 years in accordance with the University Code of Good Practice in Research - http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/

Name of Person Photographed …………………………………………   Signature
……………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………………

Name of Researcher ……………………………………………………..   Signature
……………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Appendix 9: Instructions for taking or selecting photographs of Study 1

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: An Investigation of Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Psychosocial Adaptation and Academic Acculturation of International Thai PhD Students
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid - Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research. In compliance with the ethical use of visual images for research purposes, we would like you to consider the following points when taking photographs to permit the use of the photographs for both the interview and publication purposes. My research employs the visual metaphor technique, which is aimed at encouraging you (the participant) to reflect on your perception of Thai cultural identity. Then I will explore further during the photo-elicitation interview how your Thai cultural identity impacts on your overall adaptation as a doctoral student in the UK. Photographs play a twofold function, i.e. a) to reflect on your perception of Thai cultural identity and how this perception has impacted on your overall adaptation as an international Thai PhD student, and b) to serve as stimuli/drivers during research interviews.

I would like you to take photographs or select existing photographs from your archived photos that represent your Thai cultural identity (4 photos). Please take photographs which you feel represent meaningfully these experiences. These could be symbolic representation of objects, places or anything that you feel is important to you. Please use your own discretion when taking photos. If you do not feel comfortable taking a photograph of anything, you do not need to do so. Please take photographs of items that you consider meaningful to your understanding of Thai cultural identity; it doesn't matter how 'insignificant' it appears to be at first sight. (*Cultural identity refers to symbols, values, norms and traditions that represent being Thai which is unique from any other culture.)

- Please make sure you are taking photographs in public and private spaces, where you have permission to take photographs.
- If you need to take a photograph of other people, please ask for their permission and their signature on the consent form before proceeding to take their photographs.
- Please do not take photographs of items categorised as 'artistic works', e.g. paintings, cartoons, sketches, photographs and moving images such as films.
- Consider taking 'no faces' photographs where people are not recognisable in the photograph by focusing on a body part, e.g. a pair of hands or feet, or photos taken in such a way that the identity of the photo subject is concealed, e.g. a photo taken from the back or a photo taken from a great distance.

Appendix 10: Instructions for taking or selecting photographs of Study 2

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees
Name of Researcher: Nasatorn Witayarat - n.witayarat.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Dely Elliot - Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk and Dr Kate Reid -
Kate.Reid@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research. In compliance with the ethical use of visual images for research purposes, we would like you to consider the following points when taking photographs to permit the use of the photographs for both the interview and publication purposes. My research employs the visual metaphor technique, which is aimed at encouraging you (the participant) to reflect on your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity after studying a PhD in the UK. Then I will explore further during the photo-elicitation interview how your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity affects the challenges of your re-adaptation to Thai culture and your institution after your return to Thailand. Photographs play a twofold function, i.e. a) to reflect on your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity and its impacts on the challenges of your re-adaptation to Thai culture and your institution after returning to Thailand, and b) to serve as stimuli/drivers during research interviews.

I would like you to take photographs or select existing photographs from your archived photos that represent your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity (5 photos) as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK. If you select existing photographs from your archived photos, please make sure that if you do you have personally taken these photographs. Please take photographs that you feel meaningfully represent these experiences. These could be symbolic representations of objects, places or anything that you feel is important to you. Please use your own discretion when taking photos. If you do not feel comfortable taking a photograph of anything, you do not need to do so. Please take photographs of items that you consider meaningful to your evolved sense of Thai cultural identity; it doesn't matter how 'insignificant' it appears to be at first sight. (*Cultural identity refers to symbols, values, norms and traditions that represent being Thai which is unique from any other culture.)

- Please make sure you are taking photographs in public and private spaces, where you have permission to take photographs.

- If you need to take a photograph of other people, please ask for their permission and their signature on the consent form before proceeding to take their photographs.

- Please do not take photographs of items categorised as 'artistic works', e.g. paintings, cartoons, sketches, photographs and moving images such as films.

- Consider taking 'no faces' photographs where people are not recognisable in the photograph by focusing on a body part, e.g. a pair of hands or feet, or photos taken in such a way that the identity of the photo subject is concealed, e.g. a photo taken from the back or a photo taken from a great distance.

Appendix 11: Ethical Approval for Study 1

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Administrative & Academic Review Feedback

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐   Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application ☒

_____

Application Details

Application Number: 400160008

Applicant's Name: Nasatorn Witayarat

Project Title: An investigation of cultural identity and its impact on psychosocial adaptation

Application Status: Lead Review Complete - No Changes Required

Date of Administrative/Academic Review: 13/10/2016

NB: Only if the applicant has been given approval can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

_____

Recommendations   (where changes are required)

Where changes are required all applicants must respond in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee (on the following page) and upload this as the Resubmission Document through the system to explain the changes you have made to the application.

All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded.

If your application is rejected a new application must be submitted via the online system. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document uploaded as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

REVIEWER COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE
All concerns have been addressed. Good luck with the research!	

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE
Application Form **Supporting Documentation**	

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries, please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

Appendix 12: Ethical Approval for Study 2

![University of Glasgow - College of Social Sciences]

13 November 2017

Dear Nasatorn Witayarat

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Evolved sense of Thai cultural identity, academic and social development and challenges Phase 2: Re-adaptation experiences of international Thai PhD returnees

Application No: 400170035

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 13 November 2017
- Project end date: 31 July 2018
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research:
(https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:

https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffa ndpostgraduatere searchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

Muir Houston, Senior Lecturer
College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer
Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education Research
University of Glasgow
School of Education, St Andrew's Building, 11 Eldon Street
Glasgow G3 6NH
0044+141-330-4699   Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Page   **1**   of   **1**

Appendix 13: Interview Questions of Study 1

<u>Demographic questions:</u>

a.) What is your discipline?

b.) What year are you in for your PhD study?

c.) In which age group do you belong: a) 25 and younger, b) 26 to 30, c) 31 to 35, d) 36 to 40 and e) 40 and older?

d.) Why did you decide to study for a PhD in the UK?

e.) When did you arrive in the UK to commence your PhD study?

f.) Have you received a scholarship or are you self-funding?

g.) How many people do you live with? Where are they from?

<u>Terminologies:</u>

- Before I start asking you questions, I would like to clarify some terminologies and give you the definition of cultural identity.

a.) Values are defined as "the importance of something" (Pearson, 2014, p.2019) For example, when Thai people meet each other the person who is younger will perform a nonverbal gesture or the "wai". The "wai" reflects the values of respecting a person who is older than you.

b.) Norms are rules for behavior in a specific situation. For example, when Thai people meet each other the person who is younger will perform a nonverbal gesture or the "wai".

c.) Traditions refers to "a <u>belief</u>, <u>custom</u>, or way of doing something that has <u>existed</u> for a long time" (Pearson, 2014, p.1948). For example, on their birthday, Thai people will normally make merit by giving alms to monks, releasing a bird from a cage, or releasing a fish or turtle back into the water. Another example includes festivals such as Loy Krathong and Songkran.

d.) Culture is defined as "the beliefs, way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society" (Pearson, 2014, p.432).

The original version of the interview questions **before** the pilot study	The revised version of the interview questions **after** the pilot study
1. Please select a photograph that represents distinct Thai cultural identity. Please describe what is in the photograph, and relate it to Thai cultural identity.	- Definition: Cultural identity refers to the values, norms and traditions that you share with other Thai students.
- What are the characteristics of Thai cultural identity?	1. Please select a photograph that represents distinct Thai cultural identity. Please describe what is in the photograph, and relate it to Thai cultural identity.
- Definition: Cultural identity refers to the values, norms and traditions that you share with other Thai students.	- What are the characteristics of Thai cultural identity?

The purpose of this study is to investigate international Thai PhD students' perceptions of their cultural identity. This research will explore how cultural identity influences Thai students' attitudes towards their general adaptation and academic acculturation as students in the UK. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of international Thai students' learning experiences in the UK, including the struggles and benefits for those who study outside Thailand.

<u>Main questions:</u>

1. Please select a photograph that represents distinct Thai cultural identity. Please describe what is in the photograph, and relate it to Thai cultural identity.

- What are the characteristics of Thai cultural identity?

The original version of the interview questions **before** the pilot study	The revised version of the interview questions **after** the pilot study
Prompts: *- Are there things you consider to be distinct Thai cultural strengths?* <mark>*Thai cultural weaknesses?*</mark> *Or* *- What makes Thai people different from people from other cultures (e.g. American, Hispanic and Arabic cultures? From other Asian cultures? From Western cultures?*	*Prompts:* *- Are there things you consider to be distinct Thai cultural strengths?* <mark>*things that Thai people don't like?*</mark> *Or* *- What makes Thai people different from people from other cultures (e.g. American, Hispanic and Arabic cultures? From other Asian cultures? From Western cultures?*

1.1 Please select a photograph that links your sense of cultural identity with
    a) living in the UK b) studying for a PhD in the UK.

- Can being Thai affect the way you interact and/or socialise with the people around you? Please explain.

- Do you think that growing up and being surrounded by Thai culture influence your approaches to learning? Please explain.

[Definition: Approaches to learning refers to the ways that you were taught to learn, e.g. memorising, critical thinking, skimming and scanning when you read an article].

Prompts:

- Are there challenges when you interact and/or socialise with other people from different cultures? If so, what are they?

The original version of the interview questions **before** the pilot study	The revised version of the interview questions **after** the pilot study
- How do you adapt yourself when you relate to other people from another culture? *a) Asians b) non-Asians c) locals*	*- How do you adapt yourself when you relate to other people from another culture?* *a) Asians b) non-Asians such as people from other Western countries apart from the UK, people from Latin America and from the Middle East or North Africa c) locals*

- As a Thai PhD student, are there distinct challenges when you write your PhD thesis? If so, what are they?

1.2a The literature suggests that living in a different country can affect one's awareness of individuals' cultural identity. If you agree, please select a photograph and link this to your greater awareness of Thai cultural identity.

Please look at the table below for example:

Western cultural identity	Thai cultural identity
- An American friend puts his feet on a coffee table when sitting on a sofa in the main library.	A Thai woman won't do like this.
- When being asked to choose a restaurant for dinner, an English friend will name the restaurant that she would like to go to.	A Thai friend will let you choose the restaurant.

Prompt:

- Are there situations which make you understand the idea of Thai cultural identity better while you are living and studying in the UK?

- *What are the factors that could possibly lead to a greater awareness of your cultural identity?*

1.2b The literature also suggests that international students' sense of cultural identity evolves as a result of living and studying abroad.
- If you agree, could you select a photograph that can represent your experience of your evolving cultural identity? Please describe what is in the photograph.

Prompt:

- What are the factors that could possibly influence your evolving Thai cultural identity?

2. What competencies do you feel are most important for a PhD student to have, in order to successfully complete a PhD?

3. If you were to give one piece of advice for new international PhD students, what would it be?

Appendix 14: Interview questions of Study 2

<u>Demographic questions:</u>

A.) What was your research area?

B.) Currently, are you using your PhD work in your current role? What is the job title that you have?

C.) When did you start undertaking a PhD in the UK (with specific date and year)?

D.) When did you return to Thailand (with specific date and year)?

E.) Why did you decide to study for a PhD? And why did you choose to study for a PhD in the UK?

F.) How old are you?

G.) Did you receive a scholarship or were you self-funding during the PhD? Would you tell me where the scholarship is from?

H.) What was your marital status when you did a PhD and now?

- The purpose of this study is to examine how an evolved sense of their Thai cultural identity affects the challenges of Thai international PhD returnees' re-adaptation to Thai culture, society and their institutions, ways to deal with the challenges, personal changes, academic development, career advancement and to forming relationships with other people. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that could enhance theoretical and practical understanding of Thai international PhD returnees' experience in the UK, including their personal changes and academic development as a result of studying for a PhD in the UK.

- Before I start asking you questions, I would like to give you the definition of cultural identity. Cultural identity refers to the values, norms and traditions that you share with other Thai people, e.g. a nonverbal gesture or the "wai", making merit by alms for monks and Thai festivals.

<u>Interview questions</u>

The original version of the interview questions **before** the pilot study	The revised version of the interview questions **after** the pilot study
1. In this research interview, I would like you to think back to the time when you returned to Thailand after you completed your PhD.	1. In this research interview, I would like you to think back to the time when you returned to Thailand after you completed your PhD.
Please take a few minutes to remember this time. You may recall feelings and <mark>expectations</mark> that you had upon your return. Please take a few moments to recall this time.	Please take a few minutes to remember this time. You may recall feelings and <mark>job expectations or expectations of the relationships with others</mark> that you had upon your return. Please take a few moments to recall this time.

Now, can you describe for me what was it like to return to Thailand after your period away from home?

Prompts

- What was it like in terms of re-establishing your personal interests?

2. Can you select a photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to work and professional life?

Prompts

- What was it like in terms of re-establishing your professional interests?

- How did you re-adapt yourself to your institution?

- Tell me more about the challenges of your re-adaptation to your institution?

3. Can you select a photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to personal or social relationships, e.g. family and friends?

- Please explain what is in the photograph and how it depicts your re-adaptation to personal or social relationships?

Prompts

- What was it like in terms of re-establishing relationships? (your family, your close friendship, what was it like?)

4. Can you select a photograph that connects you as a Thai person who returned to your home country, society or community?

Prompts

- In what ways did your identity as a Thai person differ upon your return?

5. What is the best thing that has happened after you returned to Thailand?

- Can you capture that in the photograph? Please explain what is in the photograph and how it depicts the best thing that has happened after you returned to Thailand?

6. What are the things you found challenging after you returned to Thailand?

- Can you capture that in the photograph?

- Please explain what is in the photograph and how it depicts the challenge after you returned to Thailand?

Appendix 15: Table of All Selected Photographs by Participants of Study 1

Participants' Pseudonym	A photograph that represents distinct Thai cultural identity	a photograph that links your sense of cultural identity with a) living in the UK b) studying for a PhD in the UK.	A photograph that affects the awareness of your cultural identity	A photograph that represents the experience of your evolved Thai cultural identity
1. Tawan	Spicy Thai soup	Participant and his wife in the UK	Buddha images	Scottish men in a kilt
2. Klang	Participant in Thai national costume	King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Thai King Rama IX)	Thai noodle	Thai green curry
3. Gao	A tower	Forth Bridge	A cat	A tree in front of a building
4. Phan	A Buddha image	Thai food	A native lecturer delivering a lecture	Toilet rules
5. Toei	Having Thai food with other Thai friends	A trip with Thai and international friends	A Buddhist festival (Kathina festival)	A party with international PhD friends
6. Tonkhao	A Buddhist festival (Kathina festival)	Thai red curry	Money trees at Kathina festival	Traffic lights
7. Orn	A garland of flowers	A paper floating vessel	Participant's foreign boyfriend playing Thai chess	Spicy Thai soup
8. Jum	King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Thai King Rama IX)	Thai food	Buddha images	Spanish dessert
9. Nid	A book of Buddhist chants	Thai food	A building where Kathina festival took place	A glass of beer and red wine
10. Nan	Thai food	Thai flag	A Buddhist festival	Thai food
11. Nong	A garland of flowers	A Buddhist festival (Kathina festival)	The festival of light (Loi Krathong)	Participant's arm

Participants' Pseudonym	A photograph that represents distinct Thai cultural identity	a photograph that links your sense of cultural identity with a) living in the UK b) studying for a PhD in the UK.	A photograph that affects the awareness of your cultural identity	A photograph that represents the experience of your evolved Thai cultural identity
12. Manao	Buddha images	Flood in Thailand	A woman and man kissing	An older son riding piggyback on shoulders of his father
13. Tor	A Thai temple	The King Rama VIII statue	Trees with different colours	Ramayana giant sculptures
14. Faahsai	A paddy field	A high mountain in the UK	An elderly woman and man	Leaves falling off trees
15. Baifern	A Western dish	Thai food	A bridge	A paper coffee cup

Appendix 16: Table of All Selected Photographs by Participants of Study 2

Participants' Pseudonym	A photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to work and professional life	A photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to personal or social relationships	A photograph that connects you as a Thai person who returned to your home country, society or community	A photograph that represents the best thing that happened after you returned to Thailand	A photograph that represents things you found challenging after you returned to Thailand
1. Kaimook	A tree surrounded by rocks	Ice cream	View of Bangkok at night from participant's room	A cricket on a branch of a tree	A greenhouse
2. Tonnam	A laptop and a student list	A key ring	A jacket	Participant's arm	The kitchen in participant's house
3. Kanom	A Traditional Thai building	A board game	Sunset of Bangkok	The sea	Footpaths in Bangkok
4. Khunpol	Books	Japanese food	Cups	A mountain in Japan	A ladder
5. Wanmai	A table	A wedding	Thai food	Mountains in Thailand	A site of participant's research
6. Sailom	A building	Participant's family trip to a temple	Traffic on the roads in Bangkok	The sea	Participant's laptop
7. Tookta	International Food at participant's flat in the UK	A conference in the UK	Participant's legs	A conference in Thailand	A bookmark
8. Naiphan	Participant's office in Thailand	Thai dessert	Traffic on the roads in Bangkok	A book of participant's research area	Participant's students
9. Chokdee	Participant's students	Participant's mother walking along the beach	Participant in a boat	An academic contest	Participant's institution
10. Plaifah	A book	Participant showing respect for Thai King Rama IX	A train timetable	Participant and her father on a mountain	A pair of running shoes
11. Kanphlu	A coffee cup	A table in a restaurant	Cakes	A strawberry	Participant's running shoes

Participants' Pseudonym	A photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to work and professional life	A photograph that depicts your re-adaptation to personal or social relationships	A photograph that connects you as a Thai person who returned to your home country, society or community	A photograph that represents the best thing that happened after you returned to Thailand	A photograph that represents things you found challenging after you returned to Thailand
12. Saensook	A meeting when participant collected data	Cats on a bed	A sports event	Backpacks	A site of participant's research
13. Nithi	A car in front of a building	A reunion	A night market	A magazine	View of Bangkok from participant's room
14. Kaohorm	Piles of paper	Thai food	A building	A vase of flowers	A laboratory
15. Louktarn	Participant's laptop	Toys of participant's daughter	A Chinese spirit house	A market	An office chair

Appendix 17: Themes Development of Study 1

	A	B	C
	Name	Sources	References
1			
2	**1. Thai cultural identity**		
3	Hierarchy	11	37
4	Buddhist practices	9	20
5	**2. Doctoral identity**		
6	The focus on self-direction	5	10
7	**3. Academic challenges**		
8	Academic writing	12	32
9	Listening and speaking skills	6	25
10	Different academic cultures	6	31
11	**4. Social relationships**		
12	Friendships with both Thai friends and international friends	11	30
13	Different forms of exchanges of greetings	5	13

Appendix 17 indicates how themes were selected in Study 1. The table was exported from NVivo software when the researcher used it for coding and organising themes and sub-themes. Column A contains themes and sub-themes. Column B indicates the number of participants who discussed the sub-themes, and Column C refers to the number of coded texts from the participants. In identifying the themes and sub-themes, the researcher followed the guidelines on how to determine themes recommended by Krueger and Casey (2000). For example, with respect to extensiveness - one of the factors to consider when selecting themes is to look for something that is repeatedly discussed by different participants. In this regard, the researcher selected participants' quotes that reflected hierarchy in Thai cultural identity. This is because there were eleven out of fifteen participants who discussed how hierarchy had an impact on their learning contexts of their PhD studies. Additionally, there were 37 references, which suggested that hierarchy was repeatedly discussed by a large number of participants during the interview. Thus, this suggests that hierarchy was a theme that demonstrates extensiveness due to a large number of participants discussing this issue repeatedly during the course of several interviews. The second factor is the frequency, which indicates that a theme was frequently discussed by participants. For instance, "different academic cultures", a sub-theme, reflects frequency as this issue was repeatedly discussed about thirty-one times by six participants – still regarded as an indication of its importance although there were only six participants who talked about this

particular issue during the interview. Moreover, themes were selected based on their specificity – referring to quotes that provide great detail. For example, the focus on self-direction was selected as a sub-theme since participants described their learning experiences when they were in Thailand and compared these experiences with different learning approaches during their study period for their PhD in the UK. Finally, the researcher selected the theme by looking at a theme that demonstrates participants' emotion, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity. Quotes that reflect different forms of exchanges of greeting were selected even when only five participants discussed this issue. This is because this sub-theme strongly conveys participants' awkward feelings when they exchanged greetings with their international PhD friends and local people. Thus, the researcher selected the themes by considering several factors, not simply by taking into account topics that were most frequently raised.

Appendix 18: Themes Development of Study 2

	A	B	C
1	Name	Sources	References
2	**1. Personal changes**		
3	Independence	8	28
4	Adaptability	8	20
5	Critical thinking	3	13
6	Dealing with cognitive dissonance	2	9
7	**2. Professional transition**		
8	Managing expectations	4	9
9	The capacity to re-adapt to work	2	7
10	**3. Social networks**		
11	Re-establishing connections with old friends	3	6
12	Expanding social ties	2	8

Appendix 18 demonstrates how themes were selected in Study 2. The table was exported from NVivo software which was used for coding and organising themes and sub-themes. Similar to Appendix 17, Column A contains themes and sub-themes. Column B indicates the number of participants who discussed the sub-themes, and Column C refers to the number of coded texts from the participants. Following Krueger and Casey (2000), the rest of the coding procedure is also similar to the steps detailed in Appendix 17. With respect to extensiveness, the first sub-theme, i.e. independence, was selected. Eight out of fifteen participants discussed how they became an independent person as a result of their experiences in the UK and following that, how this personal change subsequently posed a challenge to them when they returned to Thailand. Moreover, the twenty-eight references denote that this issue was repeatedly discussed by the eight participants compared to other references. Further, the researcher also selected the themes by considering the frequency of quotes. An example for this is critical thinking, which was about participants' distinct personal changes as they adopted a critical attitude upon their return to Thailand. Although there were only three participants who demonstrated their criticism of Thai cultural values, this issue was repeatedly discussed (i.e. thirteen times) during the interview. Apart from extensiveness and frequency, specificity of quotes - quotes that were specific and emphasise details, was another factor in selecting a theme. In this respect,

dealing with cognitive dissonance, a sub-theme, was selected. This is because a participant went into great detail about her conflict with her mother and grandmother due to the different opinions about the ways of bringing up a child. Lastly, quotes that expressed participants' emotion, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity were likewise taken into consideration. For instance, the sub-theme named 'expanding social ties' reflected participants' delight when they met other Thai PhD returnees who had studied in the same university in the UK. There seems to be a common bond established with other Thai alumni because of their shared similar experiences of living and studying in the UK. Altogether, the researcher considered several factors when selecting themes, which included extensiveness, frequency, specificity and themes that expressed participants' emotion, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity of participants.

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