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Integration experiences of international students: A situated case-study

Jodi Gregory

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

November 2018

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Abstract

This thesis examines the integration experiences of a case-study group of international students undertaking postgraduate research degrees at a UK university. It places a deep focus on their individual stories, and situates these within the academic and policy discourses of integration, which are found to have a lack of consideration in terms of the integration of international students. The study uses key understandings of social capital to examine how the participants have mobilised the resources embedded within their social networks to enable their interaction and participation in society beyond the university campus. The specific aims of the research are to examine the nature of the social networks and social interactions of a case study group of international students, to decipher how their experiences relate to the discourses of integration, and to analyse how their integration experiences relate to the network theory of social capital. The study is qualitative, and uses interpretative phenomenology as a guiding framework to analyse and present the data. Three distinct methods of data collection were used: Ego-network mapping, sit-down interviews and walking interviews.

The situated case study was conducted in an ethnically diverse town in the north of England, which has been a significant factor in the participants' experiences. The findings show that the majority of the study's participants have each developed a substantial social network during their time in Britain. They have an even mix of co-national and international friends, and some have developed co-national friendships with British people with ancestral links to their home country. Indeed, a substantial finding from this study, is that the 'host' community is seen as both the settled ethnic minority communities within which the participants interact, as well as the conveniently diverse nature of Hilltown. The participants are strategic and often use rational choice when forming friendships, in particular when seeking friendships with 'local' people for help with language and local cultural knowledge.

Despite the consuming nature of their research, all participants acknowledge that they have to impose their own limits on how much time they spend working on it each day and look for ways to *break up* their routine and *break free* from the grasp of their studies, which leads to their interaction and participation in the wider society. The way they do this allows the study to interrogate key terms found in the integration discourse, such as 'shared' British values and sense of belonging, as the participants view the British ways of being and doing in a relative way. Nonetheless, they often show certain elements of integration that might be expected of permanent migrants such as an engagement with the local community or a wish to give back something to society. The study also reveals a certain resilience when faced with issues such as perceived discrimination or explicit racial abuse in the street.

The study exposes a sense of appreciation as the participants are able to easily recreate their consumption habits from their home countries, owing to the presence of international chains as well as the multi-cultural nature of Hilltown. In addition, the fact that the participants themselves all have some previous experience of working in different countries or for international companies means that they can be described as natural transnationals, and there is evidence that they become a useful social contact for others who arrive in Hilltown. Finally, there is strong evidence within the participants' accounts that they mobilise the social capital resources from their social networks to find information, accommodation and employment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

1.1. Introduction

High levels of immigration in Britain have for many years been the subject of much political focus and are often amongst the most prevalent of voters' concerns during elections (Castles, 2009; Blinder and Allen, 2016). Immigration is thought to have had a significant impact on Britain's decision to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum and it is certainly a divisive issue for politicians, academics and the general public. Integration, or rather a lack of integration, is a key issue and as such has been prioritised on the policy agenda for some years, especially so since the 2001 riots in the north of England and their related reports (Cantle, 2001; Clarke, 2001; Ouseley, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). International students in the UK are counted in net migration figures, and count for a significant proportion of immigrants in Britain. Yet whilst their presence is acknowledged in Home Office statistics, they are still given scant attention in the policy or academic literature surrounding integration so we know little about their integration expectations and experiences. This qualitative study aims to explore this discrepancy as it places a deep focus on the social lives of a case-study group of international students in order to critically examine their integration experiences in the UK.

Thousands of studies have been previously carried out surrounding the on-campus or academic experiences of international students, yet much less is known about their time spent away from the university. Although they arrive in Britain to take a degree course, we must recognise that the time international students spend outside of the university context undoubtedly has a great effect on their overall experience. International students interact with people in society, build a social network and participate in activities that are unrelated to their university degree. Still, they continue to be framed through immigration policies with a focus on numbers and measures and their contribution to society, rather than being

acknowledged as a group with potential integration needs matching those of other recent migrants as well as settled communities. They are not considered as a community whose interactions and participation in society ought to be taken seriously. Perhaps this is because the need for an integration focus in the context of 'privileged' or 'temporary' migrants such as international students is not seen as important at the wider macro level.

Opinions abound and in the academic setting I have often heard claims about what international students *ought* to do in terms of social and cultural integration to get the most out of their time in the UK, but rarely it seems that the international students themselves are asked about their perception of their own integration experiences. This study therefore aims to investigate the nature of the social networks and social interactions of a group of international students. In doing so, it will critically evaluate how their experiences relate to the theoretical and policy discourses of integration (Cantle, 2001; Modood 2013; Kymlicka 2012) and how their integration experiences relate to the network theory of social capital (Lin, 2001) and other key understandings of social capital (Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1990).

The background and positionality of myself as researcher is important to sketch here at the outset as it elucidates my interest in the social experiences of international students. This is for the benefit of the reader as it is an attempt to offer complete clarity as to who the researcher is. I have spent the past fifteen years working with international students in further and higher education in the UK as a lecturer, personal tutor, workshop facilitator, events organiser and in learning development. The aspect of work I enjoy the most is having impromptu conversations with students about their experiences in the UK. This has had an undeniable impact on my tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1964) as a researcher both in terms of the experiences of international students and the differing attitudes of people who

work with them. In addition, I collaborated with others to open a café bar and music venue in the case-study university town, which itself is an 'intercultural social space' (Wood and Landry, 2008) as it attracts a diverse customer base. By default, my business interests have also led to me having an extended network thus extensive knowledge of social events in and around the town. Not only has this allowed me an insight into the interactions and behaviours of different social groups, but it has also given me a unique perspective on the interactions of international students as I have come to know them both within and beyond the university campus. My observations of international students attending the local open-mic night or quiz night, for example, inspired me to look further into their non-academic social interactions and their integration experiences.

Aside from my professional life, I come from a 'transnational' family, with the majority of my family members either having emigrated overseas or who spend significant amounts of time overseas and I have regularly visited them over the last twenty years. I also lived in the north of Spain as a student in my twenties and completed the final stages of my doctorate whilst living in the south of Spain. These experiences have prompted me to reflect on the meaning of integration for myself, and to observe the ways in which other British expatriates seek to integrate. Unavoidably, this has affected the conclusions I have drawn in Chapter 8 due to my recent lived experience and reflections about this. Breese and Langley (2005) suggest that internationally mobile students act as ethnographers, learning by observing the culture of the host society, which I can certainly relate to. Much like the participants in this study, it is fair to say that 'transnationalism' for me is a normal part of life. In qualitative research the researcher is always involved and subjective and more reflexive discussions regarding my position as the researcher and indeed the impact of my choices as the researcher will be woven throughout the thesis.

The present study foregrounds integration as a key concept. The study of migration and mobility brings with it several interrelated concepts, such as transition, adaptation, integration and acculturation. Most notably, the concept of integration features within the field of social psychology under the wider framework of acculturation (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2008; Kim, 2008) and one can find many exemplary studies focused on the acculturation experiences of international students (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Campbell, 2015). My involvements working with international students and living in different parts of Spain however, have led me to believe that in order to examine the lived experiences of international students, it is essential to take into account the situated context in which they go about their daily lives. This context includes their individual personality traits, as well as the local opportunities and resources to which they have access and the particularities of the community in which they live during their educational sojourn. The notion of integration has emerged in the UK policy discourse, within which a localised approach is favoured, and also within which the term 'acculturation' noticeably remains an implicit, rather than explicit, concept. It is because this study uses the integration discourse as a starting point that I have chosen to focus on the *integration* experiences of international students in the specific UK context.

The way in which integration is perceived by the public, defined by academics and approached by the UK government has changed and been highly contested throughout the years. The 'race riots' in the north, the recent and not-so-recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, the migration crisis following war in the Middle East, Britain's decision to leave the EU and the upsurge of populism and far-right political movements in the UK and Europe have all played a part in this. A key concern of those who voice it is that there is not enough integration, not enough contact between the minority and majority communities, and that the strong bonds between people within ethnic minority

communities is a problem to be solved (Goodhart, 2013). The present chapter will set the context for the study in terms of the notion of international students as migrants, the political and diversity landscape in Britain, and the disparate findings concerning the international student experience. Firstly, I will explain what this study means by the term 'international students'.

1.1.1. Understanding the term 'international students'

Whilst carrying out case study research such as this, it is very important that the researcher does not unintentionally support the notion of homogeneity. There are different intersections of class, gender, faith and nationality that reinforce each other, meaning that it is problematic to homogenise international students as one group. Rather, the study's participants are seen as individuals each having their own subjective integration experiences. On a practical level, it is also evident that there are different ideas of what an international student actually is. In the administrative sense, in the UK the term 'international student' is used in contrast with 'home student' in order to describe their fee status. The term is problematic however when trying to conceptualise these students in research. For example, those from the EU are classed as 'home' students because they pay 'home' tuition fees even though they may have moved to Britain in order to study. Furthermore, a British citizen is classed as an 'international student' if they have lived outside the EU for three years or more before starting their course.

This research cuts across the wider fields of integration, migration and student mobility. It uses the term 'international student' to mean *any student who has chosen to move to the UK for the first time for the purpose of study*. It argues that classifying these people according to their *migration in order to study* is the only credible way to homogenise them for the purpose of research. The researcher supports the different terms: student

sojourner; overseas student; mobile student; internationally mobile student and international student and all terms feature at some point throughout this text, although 'international student' is the main term used due to its dominance in UK academic (Brown, 2009a; Rienties, Johan and Jindal-Snape, 2014) and policy (Blair, 2000; May, 2017) discourse.

1.2. International students as migrants

People have always travelled to further their education. Ancient Greeks travelled for philosophical insight, early Muslim scholars travelled in search of religious knowledge, and nowadays there are many factors involved in people's decision to move to a different country to take a formal course of study. Some simply have the desire to travel and further their understanding of the world, whilst others are more strategic in planning and accomplishing an educational sojourn. Some might have failed to secure a place in a domestic higher education institution and many seek a 'Western' education under the expectation that it will present them with more opportunities upon graduation.

Educational mobility has changed shape considerably since those early travelling scholars. It is a huge global business and one that is growing. According to the ICEF Monitor (2015, online), the universal population of internationally mobile students more than doubled from 2.1 million in 2000 to nearly 4.5 million in 2011. Before long there will be close to five million internationally mobile students throughout the world. In the UK alone it is estimated that on- and off-campus spending by international students and their visitors generates £25.8 billion for the economy (Universities UK, 2017). In the British context, international student numbers have been on the rise since the mid-1990s. Although numbers have fallen since their peak in 2010, the latest figures at the time of writing show that there were as many as 168,000 new arrivals in 2015 which counted for 26% of total inward migration

in the UK. As of 2015 there has been no 'numbers cap' for universities recruiting international students, although stringent measures are taken to ensure they leave when they graduate. Since many stay for three years or more whilst they complete their studies, at any one time there are around 438,000 international students living in the UK. Of these, around 192,000 will stay for over one year (Universities UK, 2017).

Numbers of international students have not always been so high. An economic shift which commenced with the Thatcher government in the 1980s and continued with Tony Blair's 'New Labour' government saw a time of great change in the funding structures of higher education. This coincided with the introduction of full university tuition fees for non-European students, who had previously been allowed to study in the UK free of charge (Tasker and Packham, 1990). Universities began to aggressively drive forward their recruitment, using their tuition fees as a vital source of income. Tony Blair is known for liberalising UK migration policy, as his government introduced the notion of 'managed migration' from which the UK would benefit financially (Flynn, 2005). For international students, this led to the 'Prime Minister's Initiative' which involved two five-year strategy phases from 2001 to 2011 with the main aim of increasing their numbers in the UK (UKCISA, 2015). The timing of this alongside the terrorist attacks of 9/11 meant that recruitment of international students in the US was reduced which also arguably helped the UK to achieve such growth (Findlay, 2011). Importantly, policy discussion of integration (and migration literature in general) seldom concerns itself with the social needs of 'privileged migrants' such as international students (Fechter, 2007; Kunz, 2016). Rather, they are seen as a source of revenue.

Despite the many perceived advantages of welcoming international students to Britain, there have been a number of changes in immigration policy in more recent years mostly

stemming from a concern about those who try to abuse the system and gain a student visa in order to enter the country and then disappear. During Blair's time in office, a number of 'bogus colleges' were discovered within the UK which sponsored international students as a money-making scam whilst offering degrees without official accreditation. Fraudulent activity in the student visa system itself was also uncovered whereby, amongst other things, students would pay for 'fake sitters' to take their English language entrance tests leading to the label 'bogus students' (Home Affairs Committee, 2008). The scale of this problem is unclear, although it exists in the sending and receiving countries hence there remains an obvious concern for student migration to be well-regulated as part of the wider system. The decision to count international students in net migration figures was especially significant, as they have become framed politically as migrants, arguably replacing the aforementioned notion of the travelling scholar.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses International Passenger Survey (IPS) data in order to estimate student migration, and uses the United Nations' definition of a long-term migrant as:

A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence *for a period of at least a year* [author's emphasis] so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. (ONS, 2018, online)

Whilst those students who live and study in the UK for one year or more are technically 'migrants', perhaps the most difficult clarification to make in terms of the present study is defining what *type* of migrant an international student is. Migration is after all not only a technical term; it is clearly also a heated and divisive political issue. From the UK perspective, immigrants are those who move there from a different country and the debate broadly distinguishes between those immigrants who are thought to 'make our country greater' (Green, 2011) and those who are thought to put a strain on our public services and cause issues for integration. There has also been much debate in the House of Commons about whether or not international students ought to be classified as migrants at

all. The main justification for the classification is based on the idea that they have a societal impact and that the 'idea that somebody can be here for three, four, five years or longer but in some way do not have an impact' is 'absurd' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Committee meeting, 2013, p.5). Whilst it is true that they are taking part in society and thus accessing social resources such as housing, transport and healthcare, it is of note that the notion of 'impact' is very different from Blair's idea of 'contribution' as discussed above (Lomer, 2016).

University Vice Chancellors, business leaders and many in the current government have publicly called for the policy of counting international students as migrants to be scrapped (Merrick, 2018, online). Recent governmental figures suggest that 97% of students do in fact return home on completion of their studies (UK Home Office, 2017) and Home Secretary Amber Rudd launched an inquiry into this when she was in office, perhaps signalling a move by the government to remove them from the net migration figures. Nonetheless, at the time of writing, Prime Minister Theresa May stands firm in the decision that they are counted and therefore classed as migrants, albeit a privileged group of favourable migrants.

A report written jointly by British Future and Universities UK (2014) conveys the results of a survey with the clear message:

Most people do not see international students as 'immigrants'. While many people may have negative feelings towards some forms of immigration, they view international students, on the whole, in a very positive light – as people who contribute economically, intellectually and culturally to Britain. (Universities UK, 2014, p.7)

Certainly, international students bring enormous economic benefit to the host country, estimated at £7 billion in Britain per year in terms of export earnings, \$30 billion in the USA and \$20 billion in Australia. International education is indeed now a global business and in the UK it is a very valuable export. Students from overseas are also thought to help 'build

the UK brand' and return home after graduation promoting British culture in a positive light (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013a). They are considered important ambassadors for the UK and their affiliation with Britain is seen by the government as a valuable future asset. A more useful classification that the present study favours is to distinguish between 'settled' and 'post-immigration' minorities (Modood, 2013). In this way, for the purpose of the discussion, international students fall into the same general classification of newly-arrived migrant - newly-arrived meaning that the memory of arrival is still fresh and therefore adjustment to living in the new society is still an ongoing process.

International students are in a position to 'pay for' the opportunity to live and study abroad. It is not surprising therefore that most migration literature pays little attention to them. Moreover, at a time when decreasing net migration is a significant policy objective of the current government, the way in which international students feature in governmental reports illustrates that they are often viewed as a commodity rather than individuals with social needs and for whom issues of integration may be a significant concern. For those international students from outside the EU, before they arrive they must follow strict procedures to gain their Tier 4 visa to study in the UK and it is very clear that they are prohibited from staying beyond this unless they can secure employment with a trusted sponsor and earn the 'appropriate rate' for their job role (HM Government, 2017). The UK still wants to attract the 'brightest and the best' students though and the stricter changes are tempered by allowing them to take up corporate internships upon completion of their studies and by making it easier for them to switch to a Tier 2 visa to work in a skilled job in an area such as IT, accountancy, teaching or healthcare upon graduation.

Aside from the legal and political aspects discussed here, international students also have to live and study and often work in their host town or city. The present study is set against a backdrop of political tension regarding migration and integration in the UK. England has seen such tensions continue to manifest in instances like the violent clashes between white and Asian residents in northern, once-industrial towns (Cantle, 2001) and the reported increase in hate crimes since the EU referendum (Bulman, 2017). As mentioned earlier, immigration is understood to have had a significant influence on Britain's decision to leave the European Union with many voters hoping to 'take back our borders' (UKIP, 2016). Yet this is not entirely accurate as Scotland and Northern Ireland had a majority of 'remain' votes, an example which reflects an ongoing issue that I face whilst conducting and writing up the present study. I generally use the terms 'The UK' and 'Britain' interchangeably, along with the adjective 'British'. I do this to reflect the language used within the discourses of integration and because migration policy is set at the UK level, although I am acutely aware that there are wide-ranging and differing issues throughout all parts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Indeed, as I will go on to discuss, research on integration has seen much more focus on towns and cities in recent years as we head towards a more localised approach. Nonetheless, international students find themselves as 'foreigners' in the UK. Arguably their being labelled as immigrants could be seen as collateral damage stemming from political tension and related broader debates about Britain's diversity landscape. A brief history of this will now be described in order to set the context for the study.

1.3. An atmosphere of intolerance

Britain's lengthy and detailed past involving immigration and how to deal with diversity has always been a contentious issue in politics and has historically been the cause of instances of severe public unrest. Everybody seems to have something to say about who

to 'let in', and about how to 'deal with' segregated communities. The 'who' has changed significantly over time. At the turn of the 20th century the focus was on Eastern European settlers; Jewish people who were fleeing persecution. At that time, immigrants were often seen as unskilled and poor or, worse still, criminal and unclean. Unfortunate terms such as 'pauper foreigners' and 'destitute aliens' were common (Pellew, 1989). A momentous act of Parliament in 1905 announced new immigration controls and for the first time immigrants were made to register fully with the Home Office and complete charge of immigration was given to the Home Secretary.

A decade later, Britain reluctantly decided to mobilise its colonial manpower, mostly from India, to help with the war effort. During this period and although they were allowed for the first time to fight on the frontline, the colonial troops were very much viewed as a lesser race (Winegard, 2012). Workers were sought from the colonies (and at this point, ex-colonies) again to help re-build Britain in the aftermath of the Second World War. They were largely from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia although they were not distinguished as such since they were generically grouped under the label of 'black labour' (Ramdin, 1999). The colonial workers seem to have been at cross purposes with the authorities; whilst the quiet assumption of the Government was that they would eventually return home, the immigrants themselves were under the impression they were welcome in Britain and instead they began to bring their families and settle.

The realisation soon set in as some members of the white British population made clear their views. Concerns over issues of mixed marriage, delinquency, employment opportunity, even public health, led to great tensions and the notion that immigration was a huge problem in Britain (Ramdin, 1999; Fryer, 2010). Whilst there may have been significant integration at both the community and individual level, examples are not easy to

come across in the literature. There continued to be political tensions from the 1960s to 1980s, with progressive tightening of immigration rules through the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts (Solomos, 2003). In the 1980s, funding began to be targeted at ethnic minority groups, as policies of multiculturalism with a focus on the reality and rights of different ethnic groups gained ground. Multiculturalism gave way to community cohesion and an emphasis on building shared values, largely in response to the 2001 race riots in the north of England (Cantle, 2001).

The academic and policy discourse surrounding integration, and public concern in an ethnically diverse Britain remains complex. Since the early 2000's, settled ethnic minority communities have been seen to have an abundance of problematic social capital which arguably creates a barrier to integration (Putnam, 2000; Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016). More recently the speed and scale of the latest economic immigration has been flagged up as interrupting the social cohesion of the nation. For example, when the EU expanded in 2004, Britain immediately admitted hundreds of thousands of workers from the new member states, creating an atmosphere of 'constant conflict and scandal' (Castles, 2009, p. 24) and an 'indigestibility problem' amongst the settled community (Goodhart, 2017, Ch.5). Nowadays, whilst the anti-Semitism of the 19th and 20th centuries is still an issue of concern, Islamophobia has grown into a nation-wide problem, fuelled by movements such as The English Defence League largely in response to the idea of 'home-grown' terrorists; most notably those British Muslims responsible for the London bombings of July 2005 (Sturgis et al., 2009). Furthermore, Britain's decision to leave the European Union is understood as being mostly influenced by concerns about immigration.

The actual meaning of 'integration' is contested by policymakers and academics, and is explored at greater length in Chapter Two. At the societal level, an ideal outcome of

integration is akin to social cohesion and imagines a society free of tensions over 'difference'. For the present study, it is important to emphasise that integration is being investigated at the individual micro level of the study's participants and a framework for understanding this will be set out at the end of Chapter Three.

1.4. The student experience

The idea that international students have a positive experience and continue being ambassadors for the UK when they graduate is to an extent supported by survey data (International Student Survey, 2017). However, the students themselves are often evidently aware of the above immigration debates, perhaps demonstrated in the results from an NUS (2014) survey with a sample of 3135 international students. The aim here was to understand the effect of specific policies of the Immigration Bill and it found that 51% thought that the UK government was unwelcoming and that 19% would not recommend the UK as a place to study which, when applied to the wider international student population, amounts to almost 90,000 students who are returning home having had a disappointing experience. Furthermore, 74% said that the recently introduced £150 NHS surcharge, payable when they apply to study, would make it more difficult for them to study. Landlord checks were also found to have an impact on overall experience with some landlords being classed as 'racist' (NUS, 2014).

The notion of Britain as unwelcoming has also been discussed in a small number of academic studies (Maundeni, 2001; Huang, 2008; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Brown, 2009a; Walsh, 2010). Of particular note is the qualitative ethnographic work of Brown (2009a) which paints a gloomy picture as stories emerge of postgraduate students' 'deep disillusionment' caused by their unfulfilled desire to form friendships with host nationals. The lack of contact with the host community has been attributed, at best, to

indifference on the part of the community and, at worst, to racial prejudice, even verbal and physical abuse in the streets of Britain (Brown, 2009a, p.439). Disparate findings such as these highlight a clear need for more research into the integration of international students in order to guide policymakers and practitioners to make informed decisions and develop integration policy at a local level.

In terms of the universities that enrol international students, upon arrival international students are definitively categorised as the 'Other'. An 'international student' label is generally imposed on them by universities for administrative purposes in contrast with 'host' or 'home' student, a binary which arguably plays a role in creating a barrier towards integration as is often observed in empirical research (Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). It is perhaps unsurprising that HE policy initiatives relating to international students generally have a strong focus on measurable practical issues such as employability and academic success and focus less, if at all, on initiatives which foster their integration into UK society whilst they are there. The IPPR (2013) strongly urges Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to 'take a more active role in promoting the integration of overseas students' (p.55) and rightly so. Australian academics Burdett and Crossman (2012) also suggest that universities should strive to make connections with the wider community and with local councils, yet it is unclear if this is happening in the UK context due to the scarcity of literature on international students and integration.

The vast majority of the aforementioned research involving international students is situated within the field of 'internationalisation' and is carried out by people who work with international students at universities. Although students' academic experience is an important area of investigation, it is suggested that more work needs to be done to appreciate the wider social experiences of international students, to examine their experiences of integration and to decipher how this impacts on their overall study-abroad

experience and their longer-term feelings about Britain. Ultimately, it seems that the students themselves are rarely asked about their perception of integration; To what extent is integration important to them? Do they feel the need to integrate, given the potential temporary nature of their sojourn? For international students, this study goes some way in answering the question: What does integration look like and (why) does it matter?

1.5. Research questions

This is a qualitative, interpretive study that investigates the social lives of a group of international students at one case study UK university. The specific research questions used to frame the design and interpretation of the study are:

1. What is the nature of the social networks and social interactions of a case study group of international students?
2. How do the integration experiences of a case study group of international students relate to the discourses of integration?
3. How do the integration experiences of a case study group of international students relate to the network theory of social capital?

The study has taken a multimethod approach to data collection using network mapping, semi-structured interviews and walking interviews to gather the stories of the participants in three stages over the course of one academic year. It examines their individual experiences as they live and study in Hilltown and tells their stories using their own words. Interpretative phenomenology has been used as a guiding framework to analyse and present the data in Chapters Five to Eight. This methodological approach is explained and justified in Chapter Four.

1.6. Thesis structure

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapters Two and Three both review the literature and set the context for the study. Chapter Two critically considers differing theoretical conceptions of 'integrations' in ethnically diverse societies and the modern British policy approaches to it. Chapter Three reviews the relevant literature involving international students and critically reviews the key understandings of social capital. Chapter Three concludes by presenting an analytical framework which is used to work with the data presented in Chapters Five to Eight.

Chapter Four presents the methodology and methods in detail and offers with it a defence of the interpretive phenomenological paradigm. It provides the reader with a justification for the selection of participants and offers a reflexive account of the case study institution and of the researcher's position. It details the methods used in interviewing and the rationale for choosing such methods, and explains the stages used during the thematic analysis of interview data. This chapter also gives an insight into the pilot study and an overview of the lessons learnt from this phase of the research.

Chapter Five introduces all participants, and includes the ego network maps of the student participants. The aim here is to offer an individual context of each participant so that the reader can relate back to this when reading the subsequent analyses. The chapter concludes by summarising the main themes that arise from the participants' social interactions and the ways in which they describe their life in the UK. This sets the scene for the following three chapters to analyse their integration experiences.

Chapter Six critically analyses the findings of the study in relation to the discourses of Britishness and belonging. This chapter focuses on the ways that the participants compare

their life in Britain with that in their home country. It presents their accounts about their ways of being and doing, their values and sense of belonging in the UK and interprets the ways in which they perceive the British people and Britishness, analysing how this relates to the integration discourse.

Chapter Seven considers the participation and community interactions of the participants and determines the potential structural opportunities and missed opportunities for integration found in their accounts. In doing so it critically evaluates the experiences of the participants in relation to the theoretical and policy discourses of integration, according to the framework set out in Chapter Three.

Chapter Eight focuses on social capital. Specifically, the ways in which the participants have mobilised the resources available in their social networks to gain access to information, find accommodation and find employment.

Chapter Nine offers a conclusion and answers to the research questions. The social interactions and social networks of each participant are discussed in turn, before a final discussion about what integration means for international students. The chapter concludes with some recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Dealing with diversity

2.1. Introduction

There seems to be a great deal of difference in thinking amongst policymakers and academics, about what integration is, about what success might look like in terms of integration and about the ways in which integration ought to be encouraged by policy. International students are one of the largest groups of immigrants in the UK. This study is concerned with their integration experiences during their time in the UK, the premise being that their experiences ought to be at the very least considered in the academic and policy discourses surrounding integration; not least because negative experiences may lead to future international students avoiding the UK. The study will investigate how the experiences and needs of a case study of international students relate to the integration discourses, but firstly the discourses and the approaches towards dealing with diversity need critical discussion.

Diversity in any country with a population that is multi-cultural on the grounds of ethnicity, language and religion requires a careful policy approach. Responding to the disputed issues that arise in diverse countries is perhaps the 'greatest challenge facing democracies today' (Kymlicka, 1995, p.1) given that there are underlying concerns around integration and trust amongst citizens (Putnam, 2000). In the UK, ethnic diversity has increased significantly over the past two decades both in terms of the size and range of ethnic groups. We have entered an era of 'superdiversity' distinguished by an increased number of 'new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants' (Vertovec, 2007, abstract) and international students contribute to superdiversity in Britain's university towns and cities.

Despite the importance of the integration issue there remains no joint understanding of what 'integration' is and looks like, nor about how integration can be measured. Integration can be viewed at the macro level, looking at society as a whole, or at the micro level, looking at the individual experience as in the present study. The present chapter will critically review the historical and current policy and academic discourses surrounding integration in such a way that the participants' experiences can be evaluated in the context of integration in later chapters. Integration is a problematic and little-understood concept in general, especially so for international students. The chapter will begin with a focus on the different approaches towards dealing with diversity in modern democratic societies. It will outline the key understandings of assimilation and multiculturalism(s) before critically reviewing Britain's changing policy approaches towards immigration and integration during the 20th century and up to the present day.

2.2. A spectrum of approaches

The policy discourse in the democratic west tends to pitch 'assimilation' against 'multiculturalism'. Cultural assimilation is a process that is thought to occur quite naturally over time as minority and majority cultures become more and more like each other in the host community (Gordon, 1964; Alba and Nee, 2003). There is no evidence to indicate how long this may take or indeed if it is a real possibility and many argue that full assimilation is unlikely given the number of barriers that minorities face such as language, racism and lack of equal opportunities (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Although assimilation has often been more of a *laissez-faire* expectation than a regulated policy process, we have in the past seen disturbing practices of the political authorities requiring minority groups to conform to the dominant cultural norms, for example the forced assimilation of the Native Americans in the USA and the Aborigines in Australia. A more recent and perhaps less extreme example can be found in secular France, well known for its approach of

'assimilation' (Alba, 2005) otherwise seen as 'strong integration' (Parekh, 2006), known as 'Laïcité', which requires all citizens to conform to such things as a shared national identity, shared language and shared cultural norms; a policy approach similar to that which has lost and gained popularity in the UK over the past several decades as will be discussed later in the present chapter.

At the other end of the political spectrum is multiculturalism, meant here as a state policy approach which recognises the social reality and rights of ethnic and religious groups (Modood, 2013) and focuses on how to accommodate different groups within a culturally diverse society. There is a difference between the adjectival 'multi-cultural' which is used to describe a cultural mix of people in society and the substantive 'multiculturalism(s)' which describes the 'variety of political strategies which are everywhere incomplete' (Hall, 2000, p.210) meaning that multiculturalism itself is used in different ways. Multiculturalism as a political concept took some time to become established in modern societies. Kymlicka outlines three 'waves' of western political movements, greatly incited by Hitler's ideologies in the second world war and opposing the previous 'illiberal and undemocratic relationships of hierarchy' (Kymlicka, 2012, p.6). Put very simply, we saw decolonisation followed by the fight against racial segregation in the 1950s and then the fight for minority rights emerging in the mid-1960's. Different multiculturalist approaches began to develop during the latter half of the 20th century as western politics saw the rise of cultural and social liberalism (Goodhart, 2014).

The different multiculturalisms have nuanced approaches towards integration. Hall (2000) describes 'conservative multiculturalism' as aiming to encourage integration of different ethnic groups without changing the traditions of the majority society. In this manner, Putnam (2000) dedicates a chapter in his book to civic participation (p.64) and advocates

a strong civic identity for people to be a part of. Similarly, David Goodhart is a self-proclaimed liberal nationalist and a well-known British thinker whose stance fits within the idea of conservative multiculturalism. Goodhart (2013) argues that a strong national identity is needed in Britain but he also believes that it is the duty of minorities to accommodate to majority traditions. Goodhart, like Putnam, argues for a strong notion of civic nationalism in order to integrate all citizens into a shared national identity.

Critical multiculturalism on the other hand challenges the ethno-centric and hierarchical society in the hope of creating one that is more accommodating of difference. In the British context, Parekh (writing for the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, CFMEB, 2000) argues for group-differentiated rights, asserting that Britain is a 'community of communities and individuals'. Parekh (2006) attempts to conceptualise what it is to be a human being. He concludes that there are three levels of our nature; individual nature, nature as part of our cultural communities and nature as members of the human species. He argues that human identity is an outcome of the interaction between the universal human nature and the nature of the particular individual, between what we all share and what is culturally specific. Thus the idea of a core Britishness to which all members of society ought to adhere does not sit well with him and he questions the very idea of what it means to be 'British'.

'Liberal multiculturalism' and 'pluralist multiculturalism' both observe equality of all individuals in terms of their rights to access opportunities for education and work and do not demand that individuals subscribe to a national identity or a set of specific values. Rather they allow individuals and groups the autonomy to make their own principled decisions. An example of liberal multiculturalist thinking can perhaps be found in the work of Kymlicka (1995) who acknowledges that the Rawlsian idea of state neutrality when

dealing with diversity is an 'impossible goal' (Rawls, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995, p.108) and questions who is responsible for decision-making about such things as official languages and national holidays. This leads Kymlicka, whose thinking is situated within the linguistic plurality of Canada, to also question whether the politics of the 'neutral state' hold an advantage or disadvantage for any group in society. The answer of course is that it does and Kymlicka concludes that citizens are inevitably required to fall in line with the neutral state, thus in doing so, they become disadvantaged. Kymlicka's solution is that the freedom of the individual ought to be the most important feature within diversity politics, and that a liberal democracy should allow some level of autonomy and group-differentiated rights.

If liberal multiculturalism can be seen as an effort by liberal thinkers such as Kymlicka to embrace the notion of pluralism, then 'pluralist multiculturalism' is a different form of multiculturalism that foregrounds group-differentiated rights, not necessarily calling into question their pre-existing values (Hall, 2000). The difference between pluralist and liberal multiculturalism is that the latter tends to view 'diversity' within a framework of liberalism and thus does not approve of cultural practices that are seen as illiberal, whereas the former tends to see differing traditional, cultural or moral beliefs as equally rightful.

Modood (1998) argues for a kind of pluralist multiculturalism that recognises ethnic and religious differences whilst respecting that individuals have a sense of belonging to certain groups, urging that the state recognises the political rights of religious groups. Modood suggests that the 'right kind of multiculturalism' with a focus on people having a sense of belonging to the nation and a common solidarity can create a socially cohesive Britain (Modood, 2007). Although there is not sufficient scope in the present chapter to discuss all the 'multiculturalist' ways of dealing with difference, these have been discussed briefly

here in order to highlight the presence of the wide scope of thinking around multiculturalist policy approaches.

Modood suggests that 'the need for integration arises when an established society is faced with some people who are perceived and treated unfavourably by standard members of that society.' (Modood, 2013, Chapter 7, Section 2, para. 1). The central question is whether policies of multiculturalism or assimilation help or hinder ideal notions of integration. Proponents of political multiculturalism (Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2013) would argue that recognition of the rights and needs of different minority groups in society ensures that the group members feel acknowledged and therefore willing to engage in wider society and integrate. Critics of multiculturalism such as the 'chorus of political leaders' in Europe in recent times (Kymlicka, 2012, p.1) have argued that placing an emphasis on ethnic diversity in reality has had the opposite effect; It has hindered integration as it puts our differences under the spotlight and moves away from a shared national identity.

If those who criticise multiculturalism for its supposed obstruction to integration can be seen as coming from the political right, further critique of multiculturalism can be found on the political left as many see it as an attempt to separate people along ethnic divides. For example, Sivanandan claims that 'to sponsor culture is to reify it, reduce it to its rituals' (2006, p.3) which indeed is demonstrated by the multiculturalism we often see in practice such as at carnivals and food festivals, which as Kymlicka puts it can be seen as a 'feel-good celebration of ethno-cultural diversity' (Kymlicka, 2010). This is also known as the '3S' model of multiculturalism in Britain; 'Saris, Samosas, and Steel Drums' (Alibhai-Brown 2000) and is critiqued for ignoring the real issues of inequality for ethnic minority groups (Kymlicka, 2010) or trivialising cultural differences (Bissoondath, 1994).

At the very core of the integration discourse is a focus on the people concerned, and how to categorise their needs. For some, there is a distinction between those minorities who are conquered or incorporated and those who arrive in a country as immigrants (Kymlicka, 1995). Modood (2013) disagrees with such a stark differentiation and gives the example of post-war commonwealth migration in Britain as a complicated case in point. Writing for the European Commission, Entzinger and Biezeveld (2003) establish three different dimensions of integration as cultural, socio-economic and legal/political, as well as emphasising the importance of the attitude of the receiving society. The cultural dimension incorporates the approaches of assimilation and multiculturalism as discussed above. The socio-economic dimension is where immigrants are seen as either temporary, for example migrant workers, or permanent, for example refugees. For temporary immigrants, such as international students, integration is not seen as an issue of importance given that they remain citizens of their home country, although this simplistic assumption is unhelpful as situations change and many choose to settle permanently. The legal/political dimension incorporates the state's decision on the legal and political rights of the individual in terms of aspects such as citizenship, voting rights or access to welfare benefits. These dimensions are seen as distinguishing three broadly different pieces of the puzzle of how to deal with diversity.

In Britain, inevitably, policy response to the 'politics of cultural difference' has shifted over the past few decades. Kaufman asks an important question:

Is Britain, especially England, a nation to which newcomers should assimilate? Is it a melting pot, or cosmopolis, in which a tangle of different groups give and take to create an ever-evolving hybrid? Or is it a carapace under which a growing diversity of ethnic communities conduct their own affairs, albeit celebrating their unity-in-diversity? (Kaufman, 2014, p. 1072)

Modood (2013) is also clear that there are 'distinctive, multicultural political challenges' (p. 28) in Britain and Europe and indeed it is important to map out the shifting landscape of

diversity in Britain to set the context for the present study which is set in 'Hilltown' in the north of England.

2.3. Britain's changing approaches to diversity

Britain is a multi-cultural country; originally made up of differing nations and languages, and more recently a product of 'centuries of successive waves of immigrants' (Cantle, 2008, p. 5) and as such it has a long history of racism, discrimination and limited minority rights (Rich, 1990; Ramdin, 1999; Solomos, 2003). Immigrants have arrived throughout the centuries for various reasons; In the 18th century and earlier, African slaves were brought to Britain and slavery became a very lucrative business in towns such as Bristol and Liverpool (Sherwood and Sherwood, 2007). In the 19th century, thousands of scholars travelled to Britain from India with a view to obtaining vital qualifications to allow 'entry into the structures of colonial hierarchy' (Visram, 2002, p.2). At other times immigrants have been 'allowed in' to seek refuge such as in Victorian Britain when Jewish settlers were fleeing persecution from Eastern Europe. Demographically however, the immigrant population was arguably 'insignificant' (Migration watch, 2014) until Britain needed to mobilise its colonial manpower during and after the great world wars of the 20th century, a time when it brought in significant numbers of workers.

The First World War at the height of the British Empire, carried workers from the British colonies to help with the war effort. This situation was met with hostility at the end of the war when the white troops returned to find the presence of substantial black communities, especially in the seaports (Ramdin, 1999). This combined with issues such as inter-ethnic marriage, associated concerns over mixed-race offspring and discriminatory employment practices, led to great tensions and a series of racially-motivated riots. The riots led to the idea that black people in Britain were a problem to be solved and the reaction of the Home

Office was to restrict immigration and implement deportation for those who were not British citizens. There was much political debate over the subsequent decades about how to control and limit 'black migration' and how to tackle the social issues that were thought to be linked to it, such as the impact on housing and employment and the rise in crime rates (Solomos, 2003). The basic aim of the government was to have smaller numbers of 'black' migrants so that they could be dispersed and therefore assimilate into the British way of life.

Skip forward to the 1950s and 'Race Relations' had become the new political debate. The government took a *laissez-faire*, non-interventionist approach and relied heavily on an assumption that local and voluntary groups would foster positive inter-cultural contact and look after the interests of migrants (Rich, 1990). However, the lack of adequate policy to manage the tensions that were to arise meant that consequently neither the newly-arrived nor the British-born people were supported in adapting to the change in their social environment as it became more multi-cultural (Cantle, 2008). Tensions became heightened again after The Second World War which created a fresh need to look beyond Britain's borders for extra labour, for reconstruction and economic growth. This consequently brought the 'integration problem' back to the fore as the newly arrived workers, from a greater number of countries than before, were soon subject to racism and intolerance (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; Solomos, 2003; Cantle, 2008). This section will review the changing policy approaches towards, and thinking about, dealing with diversity in Britain by critically discussing the notions of assimilation, multiculturalism and community cohesion.

2.3.1. Assimilationism and the beginning of the integration discourse

To limit black migration, The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) was passed by the Conservative government, which subjected Commonwealth citizens who were not residing in the UK at the time to new immigration controls. The Act did however allow those already residing in the UK to stay, with their close family members being permitted to join them. This inevitably led to the wives and children of migrant workers moving to Britain 'in the fear that they would be left divided by the changing laws' (Ramamurthy, 2013, p.11). Ramamurthy suggests that, by bringing their families to Britain, the migrant workers' expectations of life in Britain fundamentally changed.

The policy response to immigration was permeated by the idea that ethnic minorities represent a problem to be solved. There was a belief in both main parties that integration could only be achieved if immigration was controlled and was seen to be controlled, which had an effect on the experiences of young people in school during the 1960s and 1970s. Intimidation and violence in the playground went hand in hand with racism and bullying, as well as what some may call colonial 'indoctrination' in the classroom (Spiecker, 1991). The policy of the local council bussing Asian school children to schools outside their community to ensure that no school had too many black pupils (Bebber, 2015) and the relegation of many South Asian students to 'immigrant' classes that focused entirely on the learning of English constructed them as a problem. The logic of 'bussing' was based on the belief that this would help the migrant individual to develop the skills and knowledge to integrate, and was similar to the logic of immigration policies; As long as there were not too many, black people could be managed and 'assimilated' into the system (Solomos, 2003).

A number of voluntary bodies came together under the name 'Racial Unity' and began to engage with academic research on issues of race relations. They collectively urged an

enquiry into the situation for minorities in Britain, especially given that its growing numbers of migrant workers and their families, as well as foreign students meant that 'white people' were increasingly coming into contact with them (Rich, 1990, p. 177). Not only did they deem it important to encourage positive race relations in Britain, they also warned of the dangers of students and workers returning to their home country having had a negative experience in Britain on the grounds of racial hostility (Rich, 1990), a political anxiety that continues in the present day as international students are expected to become 'ambassadors for the UK' (Bates, 2017). Meanwhile, academic sociological research surrounding race relations was finding inherently different values between cultural groups, the notion of assimilation became seen as an unlikely possibility (Rich, 1990), and 'Integration' became the new focus in the 1960s.

Immigrants began to demand equal rights and there was some response from the government in the form of legislation through the Race Relations Acts; the first in 1965 was overseen by the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins and was the first piece of legislation to address discrimination on the grounds of race. Jenkins made a visionary statement about integration:

Integration is perhaps rather a loose word. I do not regard it as meaning the loss, by immigrants of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think we need in this country a "melting pot," which would turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman. I define integration, therefore, not as a flattering process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance (Jenkins, 1966, cited in Cantle, 2008, p.93).

Meanwhile at the opposite end of the political spectrum, the famous 'rivers of blood' speech by right-wing Enoch Powell in 1968 argued that different races would not be able to live together in harmony. In his speech, Powell challenged the notion of ethnic diversity and called the idea of integration a 'dangerous delusion', using an anecdote of a white woman being a terrified minority in her own street. Powell also described the Race Relations Act as a 'one-way privilege', suggesting that it was not intended to protect the

White British population but rather to allow the 'strangers' to 'pillory them for their private actions' (Powell, 1968, p.286) meaning that even racist *thinking* would not be tolerated. It seems that Powell's speeches cost him his job and created a taboo out of any political talk around 'how to deal with immigration' although his ideas lived on in the minds of the far-right and are considered to have been an important basis for the rise of the British National Party and, later, UKIP (Favell, 2001). Jenkins and Powell might be seen as broadly representative of the polarised politics of 'dealing with diversity' present in the UK today. Jenkins certainly had an important influence on the move from assimilationist to multiculturalist thinking in 1960s Britain and his speech marked the beginning of integrationist policies which at their peak would not only accept but indeed celebrate ethnic diversity (Thomas, 2011).

In Britain, around the same time as Jenkins' speech, the publication of *Colour and Citizenship* (Rose, 1969) was the result of a five-year study to shed light on the situation of race relations. It highlighted the existence of intrinsic cultural differences between immigrant groups whilst also criticising the racist nature of large numbers of British people, recommending that cultural diversity ought to be recognised in a positive context and that mutual tolerance would actually enhance British society. From this point forward, the language of political multiculturalism inevitably gained ground as liberalism spread throughout western politics.

2.3.2. Multiculturalism, the 'white backlash' and the language of sharing

The Scarman Report also played an important role in shaping race equality in Britain in the 1980s. The report, written by Lord Scarman in response to the Brixton riots of 1981, had the purpose of inquiring urgently into the riots and making recommendations in response. These riots were seen by many as an angry response by young black people to the 'sus'

law that enabled police to stop and search any 'suspicious person'. Many thought that the police were abusing their power to specifically target black youths (Solomos, 2003). Yet Lord Scarman in his enquiry categorically denied any existence of institutional racism, attributing the cause of the riots to 'racial disadvantage'. The remedy for this was to fund projects targeting specific ethnic groups with a view to bolstering ethnic cultures. Scarman concluded that young black men rioted because they felt unequal and his proposal was that urgent remedial action was necessary in order to prevent racial disadvantage from becoming an 'ineradicable disease threatening the very survival of our society' (cited in The BBC, 2004). Thatcher's government hence began multicultural policies, with anti-discriminatory measures, more overt tackling of racism and ethnic inequalities, and more 'special provisions' for separate ethnic minority communities under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act (Patterson, 1969, p.243). Although not a new approach, this is seen as the beginning of political multiculturalism and the *strengthening* of those measures previously set out.

Meanwhile, the development of Muslim identity politics began to place Islam at the centre of a debate about Britishness (Modood and Salt, 2011) largely influenced by the reaction of many Muslims to the publication of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988). The Rushdie Affair notably brought tensions to the surface once more in Britain as the media embraced the opportunity to highlight the threat to the structures of society posed by British Muslims and framed Islam as a threat to British identity, leading to further questioning of what it actually meant to be British (Solomos, 2003, p.221), a debate that continues today. Parekh consistently refers to Britain as a 'community of communities' (CFMEB, 2001; Parekh, 2006) and argues that cultural communities might demand certain rights in order to maintain their collective identity. Yet this kind of multiculturalism as a political approach has been heavily criticised and blamed by many for creating a non-integrated, divided

society. At worst this is thought to lead to racial and religious tensions, with a 'white backlash' being seen in the USA, UK and Australia (Hewitt, 2005; Abrajano and Hajnal, 2017).

The 'white backlash' is the name given to the hostile reactions to 'preferential treatment and competition for scarce resources' in majority-white, multi-cultural countries (McGhee, 2008, p.128) culminating in atrocious events such as the Notting Hill riots in 1958 and the nationally-prominent racist murders of Rolan Adams, Rohit Duggal and Stephen Lawrence in Greenwich in the early 1990s. Hewitt (2005) found evidence of the backlash in the stories of resentment amongst white working-class people from the neighbourhoods where the Greenwich murders took place. He heard 'complaints by the white have-nots about the impact on them of the black have-nots... in the everyday struggles for small advantage.' (Hewitt, 2005, p.2).

Putnam also suggests that diverse cities tend to be more resistant to the government spending money on welfare as the citizens are less in favour of their tax money being spent on those who have not contributed (Putnam, 2000). At the societal (macro) level of integration, a general public fear and insecurity has arisen in terms of employment, welfare benefits and safety. This has been largely encouraged by the mass media publicising the inflammatory statements made by far-right political parties and journalists, which has been the case throughout history. For example the provocative speeches in response to the Notting Hill riots by the leader of British fascism, Oswald Mosley were influential on public opinion in 1960's Britain and are thought to have motivated further violent racist attacks post-Notting Hill (Dorriil, 2006). More recent examples of the backlash were found in journalists' responses to the 2005 bombings in London that lay the blame on Britain's multicultural society (Modood, 2013).

Yet it is in cases where ethnic minorities are perceived by the majority population as troublesome that Kymlicka (2012, p.24) argues we need liberal multicultural policies to foster shared understanding and respect. Kymlicka (1995; 2012) argues that liberal democracies *can and ought to* support certain group-differentiated rights, that a form of multiculturalism can be underpinned by liberalism. Without liberal multiculturalist intervention, the immigrant groups could quickly feel threatened and become a 'racialised underclass'. This form of liberal multiculturalism, suggests Kymlicka, needs a strong focus on how to manage the risks involved; Undoubtedly, not all forms of cultural diversity or cultural beliefs can be accommodated in modern democratic societies (Kymlicka, 1995; Kymlicka, 2012).

The notion of 'shared values' emerged in the 1990s, when Tony Blair's 'New Labour' government supported another sharp wave of immigration and a more globalised Britain. A key policy goal of the New Labour Government was to focus on refugees and make them 'full and equal citizens' (Home Office, 2000). Blair asserted 'blood alone does not define our national identity...our identity lies in our shared values' (Blair 2000, online). The concept of 'Britishness' then became about core, shared values and civic engagement rather than ethnicity (Mcghee, 2008). Yet all modern societies contain numerous different ways of life. The ethical theory of value-pluralism sees many different ways in which humans can thrive, which cannot be compared by value as no one way is better or worse than another; their values are simply different (Gray, 2000). Gray terms these 'incommensurable values' and describes the two faces of liberalism, or rather, liberal toleration. On the one hand, as in the approach of Blair, liberalism endeavours to reach an agreement on the best 'way of life'. On the other, it believes that human beings can prosper in many different ways of life. Gray (2000) argues that the latter is the direction in

which liberalism ought to turn; 'We do not need common values in order to live together in peace. We need common institutions in which many forms of life can coexist.' (p.6)

Kymlicka (1995) similarly suggests that, in nation states, the ideal of 'shared values' is insufficient as a concept upon which we ought to construct the sense of belonging that features in policy discourses. He argues that social harmony cannot be created from shared beliefs, as one person's idea of what is good and right may not be the same as his or her neighbour and concludes that a shared *identity* should be what we strive for within the nation state (Kymlicka, 1995). This still has a focus on the notion of 'sharing' however, and a key challenge is to find a balance between cultural distinction and integration. We need to ensure that integration does not mean assimilation and conformity, and that the recognition of cultural difference does not turn into the idea of separate, essentialised identities.

During Blair's time as Prime Minister, The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB) was established by the Runnymede Trust and chaired by Bikhu Parekh, in order to evaluate the social situation in multi-ethnic Britain and advise how to respond to race-related issues. The resultant report however aggravated the Government as it suggested that racist episodes 'occur in Britain many times a day, every day' (CFMEB, 2000, p.57) which echoed the ideas of many in the academic world who had been intellectualising about Britain as a racist society (Kaufmann, 2014). This was rejected by those in government who were 'on the defensive against a rising tide of negative public opinion' (Kaufmann, 2014, p.1073) and accused Parekh of being unpatriotic.

Perhaps the most contentious of Parekh's work is his focus on Britain as a 'community of communities' which may be seen as highly essentialist, however he does also argue that a

community is 'not a monolithic whole' (p.105). Communities contain many different identities and everyone belongs to more than one community. Parekh (2006) encourages intercultural dialogue and suggests that we ought to make every effort to understand the thoughts or viewpoints of others and to give others a chance to justify their views. He also emphasises that a common culture is essential in a secure and integrated multicultural society and that the state must play a role in ensuring that intercultural interaction takes place in an environment of equality.

A significant turning point came one year after the Parekh Report, when the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001 lasted for three days and saw 'Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin young people clash with the police, as well as with white young men.' (Thomas, 2011, p.1) In response, the Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT), headed up by Ted Cantele, was created by the government and whose findings will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.3. The beginnings of community cohesion

The aim of the CCRT was to visit the towns of the 2001 riots, as well as other ethnically diverse parts of the UK, to conduct research into the views of local residents and community leaders and find out once and for all which problems need to be tackled in order to bring about social cohesion. The secondary aim was to identify examples of good practice in the way these problems had been dealt with at the local level. Independent reports were also commissioned in Oldham (Ritchie, 2001) and Burnley (Clarke, 2001), as well as a report that had already been commissioned in Bradford (Ouseley, 2001). The CCRT was less focussed on the specific context of each area and more focussed on the 'lessons for national policy and practice' (Cantele, 2001, p.5).

The CCRT reported what they found, commonly known as the Cattle Report (2001) and made some recommendations in an attempt to improve community cohesion (i.e. macro-level integration) and help to address some of the causative factors of the riots. The main theme of the report was indeed that significant levels of 'parallel lives' could lead to mistrust. Cattle (2001), Clarke (2001), Ritchie (2001) and Ouseley (2001) all acknowledged segregation and racial divisions as a mounting problem, thus a significant causative factor of the disturbances (Denham, 2001). The CCRT suggested a two-way effort towards change:

Successful change will require a greater collective and individual effort on behalf of all sections of the community, including the majority white community, to improve their knowledge and understanding of other sections and thereby reduce their ignorance and fear; and for the minority, largely non-white community, to develop a greater acceptance of, and engagement with, the principal national institutions. (Cattle, 2001, p.18)

The report seems to be a critique of the previous approach of Multiculturalism. It found, for example, that schooling provision, community organisations and social networks, separated along ethnic lines, ensured that many communities live parallel lives, which 'often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges' (p.9). Importantly, it suggests that the initiatives that were being developed to confront the needs of underprivileged groups, often appeared to reinforce and even institutionalise the very problems they were trying to solve, albeit with the sincerest of intentions. The notion of 'parallel lives' which suggests that segregated enclaves are encouraged to exist, not only physically but culturally, hampering the prospect of integration, is contested by Finney and Simpson (2009) who conclude that 'the evidence shows very clearly that minorities and the White population are more evenly spread than in the past.' (p.162). Nonetheless, the Cattle Report paved the way for more bottom-up approaches to dealing with diversity and raised important issues about the lived reality of integration on the ground.

The subsequent policy shift towards community cohesion brought with it a new emphasis on a two-way effort, focusing on what people have in common, and promoting shared values as the basis of achieving a cohesive community rather than celebrating diversity as was the traditional approach of multiculturalism. Community cohesion projects targeted areas such as encouraging interaction between young people, myth busting and supporting the social and economic well-being of different groups (DCLG, 2008). Community cohesion policy approaches are concerned with individuals' views and feelings of belonging and connectedness, in contrast with a focus on data as in past approaches. Community cohesion, argues Cattle, offers a new kind of multiculturalism, aimed at creating a shared sense of belonging; 'The aim of community cohesion is to tackle the 'fear of difference' more generally and to enable people to be more comfortable with all areas of difference.' (Cattle, 2008, p.171). The 'shared sense of belonging' is often referred to, although the notion of 'belonging' remains 'curiously under-theorised' in the academic sphere (May, 2013, p.6). The approach of community cohesion however sought to foster a sense of belonging within community members, and to this end many practical measures were taken, some examples of which will be outlined in the following section.

2.3.4. Community cohesion approaches

The notion of intergroup contact as a way to reduce prejudice has been theorised since the post-war period (Watson, 1947, cited in Pettigrew, 1998). From the United States, Gordon Allport is perhaps most well-known for his hypothesis (1954) that there are four critical conditions which must be present in order to foster positive contact. Firstly, he suggests that equal status between the groups within the situation is necessary. Secondly, the presence of common goals is an essential factor, the premise being that through working as a team, individual differences are put to one side as the goal becomes the focus. Next, intergroup cooperation, or to put it differently, the avoidance of intergroup

competition, is a precondition for working towards common goals. Finally, the support of some kind of authority figure or mediator is thought to validate the intergroup contact. (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analytic testing showed, however, that whilst these conditions facilitate positive contact, they are not always essential for reducing prejudice. Even unstructured contact may be effective at reducing prejudice within a specific situational context, although they found that those situations in which Allport's key conditions were present were the most effective. Importantly, there is a difference between the mixing of different groups, such as that seen in the aforementioned practice of 'bussing', and real integration, supported by Allport's (1954) key conditions.

Cantle suggests that intergroup contact theory is 'a cornerstone of community cohesion practice' (2008, p.116). In Northern Ireland, Miles Hewstone et al. (2006) have used contact theory to influence the government's work on reducing intergroup conflict. Cantle (2008) offers many further examples of the operationalisation of contact theory in community cohesion work, such as a series of 'banal encounters' engineered between White women and Asian women, and between White young people and Asian young people in Oldham following the 2001 riots. These encounters were problematic at first as the two groups had previously never met, yet they yielded positive results (Cantle, 2008). Furthermore, the Pathfinder Programme involved a number of local councils developing initiatives to try and reduce the 'fear of difference' with some success (Cantle, 2008). This fear of difference is certainly an important obstacle to challenge in intergroup contact work. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) emphasise the importance of reducing people's uncertainty about those in the 'Other' group, and highlight that there is a growing literature demonstrating that repeated contact reduces uncertainty and related anxieties about such things as how to act or how they will be perceived. The problem remains however that

there is often little or no funding to perpetuate such initiatives. Much work on the ground is done by voluntary groups and charities, although many councils in the UK have a community cohesion team responsible for running such projects.

Policy approaches after the Cattle Report then, were seen to shift their focus from the 'multiculturalist' style of respecting diversity and celebrating difference towards macro-level 'integration' through the establishment of collective citizenship and shared values (Mcghee, 2008). Yet the language of Community Cohesion has brought with it a number of critics, for example because it appears to still adhere to a central hegemonic notion of core British values. More recently, Miah (2015) demonstrates that this 'discourse of Britishness' in general is 'deeply influenced by assimilationist repertoires' (p.31). This might contribute to the social alienation of 'Others' who have not learnt the language or culture of the dominant mainstream due to any number of factors (Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). Others suggest that, within the community cohesion agenda, the abundance of policy reports using the language of assimilation takes attention away from economic inequalities and focuses too much on the values and behaviours of minority groups (Cheong, Edwards, Goulbourne and Solomos, 2007).

Central to the Home Office's (2004) *Strength in Diversity* strategy was the notion of 'active citizenship' in schools which could be achieved 'through participation, volunteering and civic action, underpinned by a sense of shared values' (p.6) yet such policies in schools and the teaching of 'socially acceptable' norms may be seen as part of a 'broader moralizing agenda to socialise young people into a national community' (Cheong et al., 2007, p.27). In essence, a move towards what is seen as assimilationist and monocultural social policy was seen to overlook the possibility that UK institutional structures and practices of racism have created inequalities for minority ethnic groups in the first place.

Perhaps these critics have missed the point. Thomas (2011) argues that by focusing too much on governmental reports rather than empirical evidence, critics of community cohesion have in effect created their own barriers to understanding its positive potential to de-racialise people's racialised experiences and perceptions and focus on real issues that affect everybody such as employment, education and training (pp.196-7). As we have seen, the concept of commonality and 'sharing' is prevalent throughout current integration discourses, and will be discussed in the following and final section.

2.3.5. A focus on commonality and sharing in the local context

Another integration challenge came when a politically significant wave of immigration began in 2004 and 2005, when the EU integrated ten new member states, the majority of which were from Central and Eastern Europe. The UK government took the decision to open its labour market to the new EU citizens with immediate effect, estimating that at the most this would bring around 13,000 new workers to the country (Consterdine, 2016). In fact, almost 130,000 people arrived from countries such as Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic, which was ten times the estimated amount. This unpredictable and sudden large resettlement from Central and Eastern Europe gave the lasting impression that the government failed to control migration, which is arguably 'an issue which continues to dog the Labour party and contributed to electoral defeats in 2010 and 2015' (Consterdine, 2016, online). This came at the same time that a series of coordinated terrorist bombings took place in London in July 2005 by what were later dubbed 'home-grown' British terrorists of Muslim descent.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) was a fixed-term consultative group, set up in 2006, to 'consider how local areas can make the most of the benefits delivered by increasing diversity and also to consider how they can respond to the tensions that

increased diversity can sometimes cause' (CIC, 2007, p.14). The CIC was led by Darra Singh and its aim was to assess the developments and cohesion progress since the Cattle Report, and to encourage communities to develop their own competence in preventing and managing community tensions. The CIC's final report, *Our Shared Future* (2007), specifically differentiated between cohesion and integration in relation to the substantial number of new migrants. It defined integration as the 'process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another.' (CIC, 2007, p.9) whilst social cohesion was defined as 'the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together' (p.9). The CIC also acknowledged the importance of initiatives using intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), and set out some specific recommendations and proposals for local hands-on community cohesion work, suggesting that all levels of government must do more to welcome and help integrate new migrants whether their intention is to be long-term residents or temporary, as it is in the UK's interests for them to be able to participate fully in the labour market and their local communities. It is of note that international students are temporary migrants, yet aside from this initial categorisation, they have not been given any explicit focus within the integration discourse.

The CIC (2007) report recognised the risks associated with 'single-group' funding that may boost 'bonding' social capital within co-national groups, more than 'bridging' social capital between different groups (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). It recommended that this be stopped, as a way of re-directing funds towards the promotion of collaboration between different groups, which aligns with Cattle's recommendations. However, some suggest that the CIC report demonstrated that the supposed 'shift' away from multiculturalism had perhaps been more of a linguistic one, with politicians avoiding using the language of multiculturalism whilst there had been little change in the principles driving the policy on

the ground (Mcghee, 2008; Kymlicka, 2012). Rather than the principles of multiculturalism having been discarded, it appears instead that community cohesion may signal a 're-balancing' of multiculturalism (Meer and Modood, 2009) and the notion of 'civic integration' has been increasingly used.

In the European context, although Germany, Belgium and France have never had state policies linked to multiculturalism, their leaders have all agreed in recent years that multiculturalism has 'failed' (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). Much media attention has been focused on the French Republic endorsing assimilation as the alternative to multiculturalism and there seems to be a tough re-emphasizing of French secularism (*'laïcité'*) in the face of the increase in major terrorist attacks in France. In the speech that the then British Prime Minister David Cameron gave at the European Union International Conference on Security Policy in Munich (2011) he said:

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values...Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism...(Cameron, 2011, online)

Cameron insisted that Britain needs a strong shared national identity; an identity that relates to and promotes fundamental British values. Speaking as a proponent of strong liberalism, he considered that a fully liberal country 'believes in certain values and actively promotes them' such as the individual freedoms of speech, religion, democracy, the rule of law and equal rights in terms of race, sex or sexuality. The discourse of sharing does not acknowledge the complexity of migration in Britain however, and is certainly questionable in the international student context.

Since the 2005 bombings in London, tackling racial hatred and extremism has been at the core of integration strategies. A counter-terrorism agenda has since been developed,

partly based on the notion that 'parallel lives' has also acted as a 'conduit for Islamic radicalism' (Miah, 2015, p.2). Under the 'Prevent' agenda, there was a policy focus on tackling violent extremism on the one hand and promoting community cohesion and the wider notion of shared values on the other. Yet the relationship between Prevent and the policies of community cohesion was 'both problematic and controversial' (Thomas, 2014, p. 489) especially in the eyes of the local authorities who had to implement both programmes alongside each other. The Prevent strategy was reviewed by the coalition government (HM Government, 2011) and a new strategy was created 'to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism' (p.39).

One substantial problem with the attempt to tackle violent extremism is that there is a lack of clarity about who the extremists actually are (Richards, 2011). This has led to an issue of 'securitisation' whereby the presence of settled and migrant communities is increasingly bandied about as a potential threat to public safety as well as cultural identity (Huysmans, 2000; Thomas, 2014). The key issue then is that the Prevent programme is seen as essentialising Muslim communities and placing them under 'surveillance' (Kundnani, 2014) which directly contradicts, and even undermines, the central aims of community cohesion work with its focus on community relations (Thomas, 2014).

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG, 2012) policy to 'bring people together in strong united communities' devolved responsibility to local authorities to develop a local response to integration, and since then policy initiatives to foster integration for new migrants has been a localised issue, although this has not necessarily been supported with funding. Things may be set to change in this respect however; In 2018, the The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) (Formerly DCLG) Integration Strategy Team has published a green paper, in which they

propose a 'new Innovation Fund to stimulate new thinking, build new partnerships and test innovative approaches so we can build our understanding of what works.' (MHCLG, 2018, p.14). In the academic sphere, there has long since been a general consensus that institutions and structural factors in the established society are mostly responsible for fostering integration, as long as they are well-resourced and have strong leadership (Bochner et al., 1977; Cattle, 2001; Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2013; Rutter, 2015). Integration initiatives are now focussed on certain key areas; promoting 'shared' or 'common' values, fostering social mobility, encouraging local civic participation and challenging intolerance and extremism. The present study is set in 'Hilltown'; which has its own localised approach to building stronger communities and which we will return to in later chapters.

Dame Louise Casey conducted a year-long study focusing on community cohesion in Britain (Casey, 2016). The report, by its own admission, echoes many of the findings of Cattle (2001) and the CIC (2007). Hence Casey criticised the previous governmental efforts to improve integration of ethnic minorities, suggesting that the issue has not been a lack of knowledge but a failure to take action and prioritise the issue both locally and nationally. The Casey report (2016) maintains the stance on the problems of social capital that had been highlighted by both Cattle (2001) and the CIC (2007); that tensions grow whenever fewer interactions exist between people from different backgrounds. Casey emphasises the positive effect that social interactions between people from diverse backgrounds can have in terms of reducing fear and intolerance as well as enabling better job prospects and social mobility.

Whilst Casey (2016) maintains that bonding co-national social connections are important at the earlier stages of settling in for new migrants, having too much of this is seen mostly

an inhibiting factor in terms of labour market opportunities and trust between ethnic groups. In terms of intervention, Casey (2016) found evidence that programmes aimed at engaging young people from different ethnic backgrounds in 'altruistic activities' have been successful. Recommendations from the Casey Review still use the language of shared values and are focussed very much at the local level. These include localised funding for integration projects, the development of local integration indicators and targeted support for community groups.

In response to the Casey report, an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration launched an inquiry into UK immigrant integration. Their report (2017) has a primary focus on the social integration of newly arrived immigrants. It moves away from the language of 'sharing' and instead uses the word 'meaningful', for example it promotes a 'meaningful sense of belonging' (p.11) and views the integration of immigrants as 'a two-way street – or a process requiring meaningful contributions by both newcomers and members of the settled population' (p.8). The APPG's four core recommendations are: the creation of a regionally-led immigration system; a comprehensive governmental integration strategy; a re-framing of immigrants as 'Britons-in-waiting' and a robust strategy for English-language learning. The APPG categorises international students in the same group as economic migrants. Yet, similarly to the CIC report, this initial categorisation appears to be paying lip-service as it is difficult to see where international students might fit within the latter two of these recommendations. The APPG's wider recommendations will be critically discussed in the context of the study's participants in Chapters Six and Seven.

More generally, Casey (2016) reiterates the consistent 'Discourse of Britishness' (Miah, 2015, p.31) described previously, re-emphasising that British values ought to be stressed

in the school curriculum and 'enshrined in the principles of public life' (p.17), which they arguably already are, owing to the Prevent strategy. The latest MHCLG (2018) green paper is written largely in response to the two reports mentioned above, proposing funding and a new integration strategy. The green paper foregrounds English language skills as a barrier to integration, especially targeting newly-arrived migrants with interventions designed to boost language skills. It also reiterates the importance of teaching British values to all people in society and encouraging migrants to build diverse social networks. Indicators of integration at the individual level are proposed and include English language proficiency, awareness of shared rights and responsibilities, diversity of social networks, social mixing at school, access to education and training and access to support finding employment.

2.4. Chapter conclusion

The intention in this chapter has been to set an important historical and theoretical context for the study in terms of the policy and academic discourses of integration. The chapter has discussed the differing policy approaches and ways of dealing with diversity and the ways in which ethnic minorities in Britain have been problematised over the centuries. Attitudes and approaches towards integration have changed and since the turn of the century the stated 'failure' of Multiculturalism has given way to intercultural, community cohesion approaches and the localisation of integration initiatives. The current policy recommendation is on creating opportunities for meaningful contact between people from different backgrounds, although this is arguably set within an atmosphere of intolerance and against a controversial policy aim of 'shared' British values. Indeed, the notions of 'commonality' and 'sharing' are prevalent in the policy discourse of integration, with concepts such as shared values (Blair, 2000), a shared identity (Kymlicka, 1995), common institutions (Gray, 2000), a common culture (Parekh, 2006), and a shared sense of

belonging (Cantle, 2001, 2008). The experiences of the present study's participants will be examined in relation to these in Chapter Six.

As the present chapter has emphasised, most research and policy discourse surrounding integration has been focused on the macro or meso level and has often arisen as a response to tensions and inequalities, even episodes of racialised violence, in an attempt to improve overall integration and avoid similar future occurrences. When attention has been given at the micro level, studies have focused on settled communities and refugees, which is not entirely appropriate for temporary migrants such as international students. Today in the UK, migrants come from a greater number of places than ever before. As a large and diverse migrant group in the UK, international students have contributed to this new era of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2009), yet policy literature seldom pays attention to their specific needs.

It is clear that international students have little hope of ever conforming to the pre-defined notions of integration discussed here, which is justification for the present study whose aim is to investigate the integration experiences and in turn negotiate a place for international students within the integration discourse. It is strongly suggested that more work needs to be done on the ground to learn about the individual integration experiences from different types of migrants themselves; international students in this case. Only then can we begin to work towards an understanding of what is needed or not needed and what works or does not work regarding integration policy. The following chapter will focus the literature further and present a framework for understanding experiences of integration specifically for the present study in the international student context.

Chapter 3: Towards a framework for understanding international student experiences of integration

3.1. Introduction

As Chapter Two highlighted, integration continues to be a problematic concept, with policymakers and academics tending to offer their own definitions according to their political alignment and research interests. Recent examples include Cantle's focus on a shared sense of belonging and mutual acceptance along with building the intercultural competence of all citizens (Cantle, 2016, cited in Casey, 2016, p.19) whilst Kaufmann promotes what he terms 'multivocalism' which 'embraces deep British identities of minority and majority alike' (Kaufmann, 2016, cited in Casey, 2016, p.19). Whilst Cantle's definition is broad, Kaufmann is clearly talking about settled migrants here and it is important to emphasise that integration also has different meanings depending on the context. Macro-level and meso-level integration has its ideal outcome of a society like the UK (Macro) and its towns and cities (Meso) being free from tensions over 'difference' whereas micro-level integration is about the individual and what they experience in terms of their participation in all aspects of society. Even at the micro level there are many reasons that people's experiences may differ. Individual factors such as age, ethnicity, sexuality and socio-economic status (Social Integration Commission (SIC) (n.d.) and structural factors such as the local spaces, places and resources, and the diversity of the local area all have a part to play. Moreover, in the context of micro-level integration there are important differences between the newly-arrived, the settled, the permanent and the temporary.

Specifically for this study, international students are difficult to place. They mostly start out as temporary although some settle permanently. Even those who do plan to return home after their studies may arrive as undergraduates and stay to complete postgraduate and doctoral studies totalling seven years or more so a large proportion of their lives having

been spent living in UK society. It is important therefore to emphasise that this study must focus on integration at the individual, micro level.

Abundant attention is given to the role of social connections in the integration process, because social interaction is clearly a fundamental issue for integration. There is a general consensus that macro-level integration brings trust and that trust within society is the key to overcoming challenges such as unemployment, poor health or racial tension (Cantle, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Field, 2003; SIC, n.d.). Although social connections are a vital component of integration, a key underlying issue within the integration discourse is the claim that 'bonding' social capital between individuals within close-knit communities has essentially become problematic in the absence of cross-community bridging capital (Cantle, 2001; Mcghee, 2003; Thomas, 2011). The concept of social capital therefore completes the framework for this study and the first part of this chapter will set the scene for interrogation in later chapters of how the individual integration experiences of a case study of international students relate to the key understandings of social capital. It will review the key understandings of social capital before focusing on social capital at the micro level using Nan Lin's (2001) network theory of social capital. At the micro level, Lin's work sees social capital as an asset of social networks. He argues that social capital is captured by the individual from his or her social network, a theory that fits very well with the research questions and methodology of the present study.

The second part of this chapter will focus its discussion on the international student experience. It will review the key literature surrounding international students in the UK and critically discuss the problematic notion of integration in light of the 'student-migrant dichotomy' that is revealed in the literature. Integration is an even more complex issue nowadays as technological advances mean that people can stay in constant close contact

with their friends and family all over the world, which will be discussed here before the current university context and internationalisation agenda is outlined. Based on the present and previous chapters' discussion, a framework for understanding international student experiences of integration is presented in the conclusion and this will be drawn upon to analyse the study's findings at the micro level in later chapters.

3.2. Social capital

The idea of social capital is that our social ties allow us to access useful resources which are considered a form of 'capital'. Putnam (2000) offers a simple definition:

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals. (p.19)

Putnam (2000) defines an important distinction between bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital. Bonding social capital reinforces exclusive identity and homogenous groups and indicates 'strong' family or friendship ties which are characterised by trust and reciprocity. The argument within the integration discourse is that overly-tight-knit communities have bonding social capital in excess and that this potentially leads to segregation and a 'parallel lives' situation (Cantle, 2001). Bridging social capital, which can encompass people across social borders and broader societies, is essential for people in order to have access to external links and information. Bridging social capital indicates networks of friends, colleagues, neighbours and acquaintances which are often described as 'weak' ties (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 2001). These ties might allow access to different yet very useful resources as well as creating important contact between different groups, as is the current recommendation within the policy discourse of integration (Cantle, 2008; Casey, 2016; APPG, 2017; MHCLG, 2018). Cantle's suggestion that we need to have less bonding and more bridging social capital, puts the onus on the people to change their ways of thinking about being members of their communities (McGhee, 2006).

Research on social capital falls broadly into two areas of analysis. The study of networks (Lin, 2001; Burt, 2000) looks towards how social ties allow access to resources for the individual at the micro level. The study of communities (Putnam, 2000) looks at the consequences for communities at the macro level, largely in response to there being an absence of social exchange. Social capital at the micro level is concerned with the value of an individual's social network ties in terms of how they facilitate access to resources or opportunities and social capital theory has been used to explain how people develop and maintain social relations. The present study is concerned with the experience of international students who have entered the UK for the first time in order to study. It focuses on how a case study of international students have formed friendships, how they describe their social ties and social networks and how this interplays with their integration experiences.

As multiculturalist policy is thought to have reinforced bonding capital whilst failing to encourage bridging capital (Putnam, 2000; Cattle, 2008; Hewitt, 2005; Thomas, 2011), social capital has been used frequently and explicitly by key researchers in the field of integration. In addition, Woolcock (1998; 2001) proposes another form of 'linking' social capital which comes from connecting to those in a position of different political or financial power, often conceptualised as a 'vertical' relationship. In theory, this might allow international students to access social capital in the form of resources or information from university staff, other students or outside organisations. The work of Putnam is perhaps the most well-known in the UK as his research has informed Ager and Strang's (2004; 2008) measures of integration, within which we can also see Woolcock's (2001) notion of linking social capital (See Fig. 1).

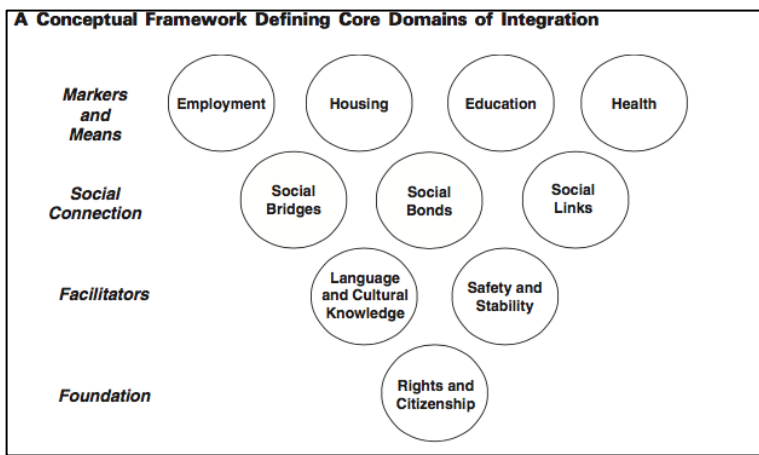


Figure 1: Source: Ager, A., and Strang, A. (2008) p.175.

Around the same time as the Parekh Report and Cantle’s research, Ager and Strang were commissioned by the Home Office in line with the policy of ‘Full and Equal Citizens’ (2000) to evaluate which conditions may be considered as indicators of integration. Ager and Strang (2004) set out a framework for refugee integration which was later used to inform discussion amongst national bodies about the core domains of a measure of migrant integration in Europe. The framework (visualised in Fig.1) includes four key areas and positive outcomes in these areas are seen as indicators of having achieved integration. The role of micro-level social connections, or social capital, certainly has an important function in the context of integration as outlined by Ager and Strang in point 3 below:

1. Achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, health;
 2. Assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights;
 3. Processes of social connection within and between groups within the community;
 4. Structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment.
- (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.166)

Ager and Strang (2008) suggest that localised studies of integration are of potential use in terms of querying the bonds/bridges/links conceptualisation of social capital and propose that there is a strong need for additional research that studies the notion of social capital as illuminating the processes of integration. More recently, the OECD and European Union (2015) are still in accordance with Ager and Strang’s initial framework and further suggest that civic engagement and social cohesion are outcome indicators of integration.

Relating to the present study, in much of the literature surrounding the social interactions of international students, authors cite Bochner, Macleod and Lin (1977) and their seminal work on friendship patterns, which found that student-sojourners have a very strong preference for same culture friendships. Bochner et al. generated a functional model that describes foreign students as having three distinct social networks - mono-cultural, bi-cultural and multi-cultural, each with its own purpose. These networks are clearly comparable to the bonding, bridging and linking theories of social capital, which will now be elaborated.

Many forms of capital can be possessed at the individual level; Economic capital relates to money or assets, is tangible and fairly easy to measure. At its very basic level, the theory of human capital incorporates the notion that educational qualifications and training are a type of capital investment (Becker, 1993), which is also of relevance to international students as will be elucidated in later chapters. Cultural capital exists in different states; in its embodied state of an individual's basic status or outlook, in its more objectified state where individuals discuss their outlook regarding cultural matters and, more measurably, in its institutionalised state where individuals gain qualifications that confirm their status or outlook (Bourdieu, 1986; 2001). The basic proposition of social capital theory is that our social ties can be used as a resource, much like other forms of capital. The different forms of capital are intertwined, and the common thread throughout these different theories is that each capital has a 'surplus value and represents an investment with expected returns.' (Lin, 2001, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 5).

Bourdieu's often-cited definition of social capital is:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (1986, p. 21)

It is important to note here that social capital is not the social relationships themselves but rather the resources that become available as a result of having social relationships. Many argue that social capital can work alongside other forms of capital to create power-inequality as 'everyone can use their connections as a way of advancing their interests, but some people's connections are more valuable than others' (Field, 2003, p.74). Some therefore regard social capital as the outcome of inequality (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; Cheong et al., 2007). Certainly, some people have more access to material resources through their social ties than others and it strikes me that international students are often seen as a privileged group who can afford the luxury of a Western education and the life experience that goes with it. The ability of some wealthy parents to pay to send their sons and daughters overseas to obtain a degree gives them a chance to gain valuable human and cultural capital (Becker, 1993; Waters, 2009) although it is also known that many international students are self-funding and take great risks to afford to take part in educational mobility. Regardless of how they finance their studies, the 'symbolic potency' (Bourdieu, 1986) of having a Western education means a labour market advantage for the returnees in comparison with their peers who studied locally. Drawing on this, Findlay (2011) suggests that international student mobility can be viewed as playing a part in the reproduction of social class, creating an elite and influential group.

Whilst it is true that, through their education mobility, international students gain important skills such as intercultural skills, cultural knowledge, confidence in negotiating diverse milieu as well as language skills, when they arrive in the UK they are often far from privileged and influential. Rather, they experience perhaps for the first time in their life being a minority 'Other'. They face the prospect of being alone and of having to begin building a social network from nothing (Neri and Ville, 2008). A number of studies have reported issues of isolation amongst students upon arrival in the new country as they have

not yet built a network and it is usually the case that students seek to minimise their loneliness by forming a co-national network of peers (Bochner et al., 1977; Sawir et al., 2008; Brown, 2009a). This can be a protective factor in the process of integration. Indeed, Bochner et al. (1977) conclude:

Mono-cultural (conational) bonds are of vital importance to foreign students, and should therefore not be administratively interfered with, regulated against, obstructed or sneered at. On the contrary, such bonds should be encouraged, and if possible, shaped to become more open to bi- or multi- cultural influences. (Bochner et al., 1977, p. 292)

Here, Bochner et al. are encouraging the formation of bonding social capital ('Mono-cultural bonds') for international students.

The Bochner et al. (1977) study also found a rational choice element, similar to the ideas of Coleman (1988; 1990). Coleman highlights that the concept of social capital indicates the resources that might be attained from relationships between people and suggests a rational choice approach towards social capital building which is centred on a person's ability to benefit somehow from their membership of social networks. This idea emphasises an individual's agency, regardless of their situation, to pursue their own social capital objectives:

If we begin with a theory of rational action, in which each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events, then social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor. (Coleman, 1988, p.98).

Coleman considers social capital to be 'productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.' (1990, p.302). He emphasises the importance of the access to information enabled through social relations (1988, p. 104). For international students, the social rules in the UK are perhaps not very clear. When they first arrive in the UK, they may lack the knowledge, confidence or even the opportunity to get the information they need so they turn to their social relations for help (Brown, 2009a; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Taha and Cox, 2016). In the students' home community, access to information may previously have been easier as they have close family and friendship networks that they have built over time.

The basic definition of social capital then is largely agreed on; that social connections give rise to resources which create returns. Whether those returns are of benefit for the group or for the individual however, is an important question. Lin states that building a theory of social capital 'must be based on the fundamental understanding that social capital is captured from embedded resources in social networks' (2001, p.3). Lin outlines four ways in which social capital can result in an outcome for the individual:

1. It enables the flow of information between social contacts.
2. It exerts influence and allows contacts to 'put in a word' for each other.
3. It adds to an individual's 'social credentials'.
4. It reinforces identity, thereby providing reassurance and emotional support.

(Adapted from Lin, 2001, p.6)

Rather than focusing on bonding / bridging / linking capital, Lin distinguishes between 'strong ties' and 'weak ties' (Lin, 2001) echoing the earlier terminology of Granovetter (1973). Lin posits that strong ties follow the 'homophily' principle as we seek social connections with people who are similar to ourselves. Alternatively, weak ties are social connections between people from different social and cultural backgrounds (Field, 2001). Lin's theory assumes that two 'primary driving forces account for most individuals' actions' (2001, p.57). Either, the individual may seek to maintain valued resources that they already possess, or they may seek to gain valued resources that they do not yet possess. Respectively, Lin characterises these as 'expressive' and 'instrumental' actions (Lin, 2001). As the aims of the present study are concerned with analysis at the individual level, it seeks to interrogate how the participants invest in social relations, how they capture the resources, or social capital, from their relations, and what returns, if any, are generated from their investment (Lin, 2001, pp. 7-8). Lin's theory is very fitting for this study and will be explicated in greater detail as it is used during analysis of the participants' accounts in later chapters. Chapter Eight in particular pays attention to this.

This section would of course not be complete without mentioning the potentially negative side to social capital; 'Social capital, in short, can be directed toward malevolent, antisocial

purposes, just like any other form of capital.’ (Putnam, 2000, p.22). As mentioned earlier, many in the political sphere are concerned that exclusivity of social ties and exclusive commitments to a narrow range of social contacts may be harmful to macro-level integration, otherwise known as social cohesion or community cohesion (CIC 2007; Cattle 2008). Further to this, Field (2003) points out that cooperation between members of a group may reinforce inequality or support anti-social behaviour and suggests that ‘social capital is often most easily created *in opposition* to something or someone else’ (original italics, p.361) and that racialised identity can be forged through social capital in opposition to integration and in fear of the destabilisation of racial solidarity.

Hyper-connectivity (Foresight Future Identities, 2013) supports the potential negative implications of social capital, as demonstrated in the 2011 disturbances in the UK. These were arguably made easier to manifest due to those involved having access to mobile phones, the internet and social networking sites. An important issue might be that such ease of communication can also disseminate distorted information. This was actually demonstrated in the pilot phase of the present study, as members of a student Facebook group actively discouraged somebody from taking a foundation year at the university based upon their own personal experiences. This relates to the notion of borderless social worlds, whose related implications for integration will be discussed more later in this chapter, after a discussion of the ‘student-migrant dichotomy’.

3.3. The student-migrant dichotomy

Although it was established in the introduction chapter that international students fulfil the definition of ‘migrant’ and are a statistically significant migrant group in Britain, their main purpose for being in Britain is of course that of ‘student’ and as such they are usually rendered ‘students’ rather than ‘migrants’ within the literature. This is what I shall term the

'student-migrant dichotomy' and is further evident when we review the academic literature focussed on international students, which falls broadly into two strands. On the one hand there is a vast amount of research in the field of education which mines the knowledge and opinions of international students, with the implicit aim of improving services and continuing to prosper as international educators (Coles and Swami, 2012; Arambewela and Hall, 2011). Given that international students contribute an enormous amount of money to universities as well as carrying out a key role as ambassadors for Britain, much of this research sees them as customers who are receiving a service and is predominantly based on an understanding that it is important to keep them happy. The second strand of research is concerned with the personal experiences of international students, focussing on what we can do for them to help them adapt and achieve positive outcomes during their time in Britain (Ward et al., 2004; Andrade, 2006; Brown, 2009a). Yet even then most academic research about the experiences of international students in Britain focuses on their experiences within the academic community and in the classroom, whilst little attention is given to their off-campus experiences and their involvement in the wider society.

The student-migrant dichotomy is given much attention in the Australian context, where the term 'education–migration nexus' has been popularised after an increase in policy frameworks that create pathways for international students to become skilled migrants. In essence they change from consumers to citizens (Robertson, 2011). Although the UK does not share the same desire as Australia to encourage international students to stay on and become skilled migrants, many do stay for long periods. When thinking about minority rights therefore, the 'education-migration nexus' sees a blurring of the distinction between 'international students' (consumers) and 'education migrants' (citizens) which in turn

creates a somewhat fuzzy line between their rights as consumers and their human rights, or citizen rights.

International students over the past century have not been immune to the social effects of racism and intolerance. Those who are visibly 'Other' are often presumed by the perpetrators of racial abuse to be 'undesirable migrants' (Brown, 2009a). One of the most well-known stories from the 1958 Notting Hill riots was that of 26-year-old Nigerian international student, Seymour Manning, who was visiting friends in London, oblivious to the riots when he was surrounded by attackers in the street (Travis, 2002). Yet they have also had a voice; Whilst there was little political action defending the welfare of migrants in the first half of the 20th century, it has been noted that African and Indian scholars who travelled to Britain for university education stood up for the rights of their counterpart migrant workers, and were actively involved in many of the aforementioned voluntary associations (Patterson, 1969; Rich, 1990; Ramdin, 1999; Solomos, 2003).

Blair's *Prime Minister's Initiative*, launched in 1999, was focused almost exclusively on recruiting international students to boost the income that they generate. The second phase, launched in 2006, was more reflective and took a broader view to include funding for projects focused on student experience but still with a UK-centred emphasis on the benefits such as the 'potential for greater educational, cultural and scientific exchange as well as greater trade, investment and political influence' again viewing international students as a commodity whilst overlooking them in the integration policy discourse. This is in contrast to the situation in 1960's Britain which recognised the 'value' and therefore the welfare of international students in terms of race relations (Committee on Higher Education, 1963). Even Enoch Powell (1968) saw international students as distinct to

immigrants, as having the right to improve their career opportunities without prejudice in a time when their educational sojourn was subsidised.

A key concept that spans the literature on migration as well as the international student experience, is acculturation. Put very simply, acculturation at the individual level might be described as a process of learning that happens when individuals are exposed to a new culture. Acculturation research often includes typological models, which seek to categorise participants in terms of their 'orientation to acculturation' (Bowskill, Lyons and Coyle, 2007). For example, one of the most well-known writers in the field of acculturation, John Berry (1990; 1997), identified four possible 'acculturation attitudes' as integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization, and subsequent models of acculturation have frequently incorporated his work. Although there is much evidence to support such typological categorisations (Berry, 1990, 1997; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Kim, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Rienties, 2016), Rudmin (2003) criticises the limited, one-size-fits-all, basis upon which theories of acculturation are often built and suggests that they frequently fail to take into account the nuances of the situation. Rudmin (2003) also questions why acculturation ought to be theorised as a typology, suggesting that 'resorting to typologies could be merely a habit of thought rather than a considered decision' (p.29). He argues that acculturation models focus on the individual *doing* the acculturation and fail to take into account structural factors and characteristics of the host society.

Acculturation at the individual level is often seen as a psychological process (Ward et al., 2001), a strategy (Berry, 1997; Yu and Wang, 2011), a disposition or attitude (Berry, 1990). Berry (2005) stresses that acculturation is a two-way process, between the newly-arrived and the host society. Integration is favoured as the ideal acculturation attitude, seen as a happy balance with the migrant maintaining their original culture as well as

interacting with 'Others' (Berry, 1997). This echoes some of the aforementioned policy literature in encouraging a two-way effort towards integration (Cantle, 2001; DCGL, 2008; APPG, 2017). Specifically in the international student context, Smith & Khawaja (2011) call for more work to be done in refining the main models of acculturation, which they argue have been developed with a focus on refugees or people who are moving permanently to a different country, so that they can be better applied to international students. Jindal-Snape and Rienties (2016) acknowledge this, as well as the aforementioned limitations, and focus on the 'multi-dimensional' nature of international students' transitions. They emphasise that, in an increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environment within the same country, we ought not only to refine models of acculturation but also question what we mean by 'mono-cultural' social networks, given that social networks have a key influence on acculturation.

Continuing in this vein, it is also evident that much literature focussed on the social experiences of international students examines their adaptation into a 'host culture' or 'host community' (Brown, 2009a; Dunne, 2009; Arambewela and Hall, 2011; Brown and Jones, 2013) and their interactions with 'host students' (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Brown and Richards, 2012), 'home students' (Leask, 2009; Campbell, 2011), 'local students' or 'domestic students' (Bethel, Szabo and Ward, 2016). These loose terms are pervasive throughout the research literature which more often than not fails to define 'host' or 'local', nor does it seem to acknowledge the multi-cultural nature of the wider local area in which the participants live. This is a significant oversight, as it seems likely that the extent of diversity found in the local area would have an impact on the international student experience. The situated case-study approach adopted in the present research emphasises the importance of *location* in studies of this nature.

Only by asking the international students themselves can we begin to determine their sense of their own status as students / migrants and understand their experience in relation to the integration discourse. International students contribute enormously to the changing shape of migration in Britain's university towns and cities. The diversification of the country of origin means that they now come from all over the world and not only from places with historical links as we have moved into an age of superdiversity. The following section will discuss the notion of integration and identity in borderless social worlds.

3.4. Borderless social worlds and fluid identities

The situation in which international students find themselves, being able to consistently maintain their attachment to their home country in a way that does not conflict with engaging with the new society is known as 'transnationalism' (Vertovec, 2009). Central to this is the concept of 'hyper-connectivity' as migration is increasingly facilitated by technology (Foresight Future Identities, 2013) and information is increasingly disseminated by electronic word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Social media allows easy contact to be maintained with support networks from students' home countries as well as in the UK (Khozaei et al., 2015) and therefore their networks are spread across the borders of two or more countries. Indeed, their online social life and the transnational social spaces in which they interact may be more active than their off-line social life whilst they live in Britain, making it as much a part of the (borderless) online world as a real physical place (Fouron and Schiller, 2001; Faist, 2000; Gargano, 2009).

Relating to the above, a study by Martin and Rizvi (2014) revealed a notion of being in two places at once as international students use the internet to create a 'virtual co-presence' of family and friends back home (Ito and Okabe, 2005, p.264, cited in Martin and Rizvi, 2014) and they suggest that we ought to move away from binary here/there and host/home

notions of place. Martin and Rizvi suggest that through their online interactions, mobile people such as international students 'actively remake' themselves and their relationships, in turn remaking the culture in the place they stay during their sojourn (2014, p.1028).

In a diverse and open society such as the UK, there is a suggested lack of clarity on what there actually is to 'integrate into' (Favell, 2001; Goodhart, 2013). As such, some writers have set out to reformulate the notion of 'society' in a way that it ceases to be routinely associated with the borders of a nation state (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2004; Favell, 2001, 2013). Thinking about issues of integration as though Britain is a society confined by its borders is out of touch with the shifting reality of migration in Britain today. Favell (2013) suggests:

Integration now – after the 'global era' of the 1990s and 2000s – cannot be what it was. During this era, the world has changed; a new stage of globalisation has swept through the old, bounded, container nation-state-society, further individualizing society, loosening social bonds, rendering borders more porous, and seeing a flattening of time and space, which enables these individuals to be far more mobile – in both physical and virtual terms – in relation to their national societies and social identities. (Favell, 2013, p.54)

The complex concept of identity is ubiquitous in the literature on integration and international students (Kim, 2001; Koehne, 2005; Brown and Brown, 2013). In particular, Koehne's (2005) work focuses on the multiple, and often hybrid, identities of international students. She draws on seminal work by Hall (1996) and Foucault (1979, cited in Koehne, 2005) and finds that the identities of international students are influenced by 'the development of new ways of talking and thinking about oneself' (p.109) as well as the 'discursive practices' within the research process itself that 'speak of people as same or different' (p.110).

Moreover, Bauman (2012) suggests that identity becomes an issue of significance only when it is challenged, and Hall (1996) acknowledged the 'strategic and positional' nature of identity, which is 'constantly in the process of change and transformation' (p.6), arguing that identity is formed through our differences. Tran and Gomes (2017) found this to be the

case with international students because they identify with being cosmopolitan, and studies such as those by Kashima and Loh (2006) and Fotovatian and Miller (2014) have found that international students may develop a common identity during their sojourn related to the very notion of being an international student, which suggests that their identity may have a fluid nature. Hence, international students ought not to be binarily defined as the 'Other' in contrast with local students, but ought to be studied in their own right as 'agents who both reconstruct their own multiple subjectivities, as well as challenge the discursive positionings attributed to them by others' (Haugh, 2008, p.209).

In the policy discourse however, for Parekh (2006), cultural communities might demand certain rights in order to maintain their collective identity. He suggests 'human collectivities' as a generic term which might apply to groups united by temporary interests, which could also be applied to international students. In terms of identity, the academic sojourn is thought to create conflict as it produces culture shock (Oberg, 1960). In international students, this creates a series of problems in adjustment as they struggle to identify as members of a group which is important in terms of their self-identity (Kim, 2001; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). The participants in the present study are all doing postgraduate research degrees, which will be methodologically justified as a case-study sample in Chapter Four. It has been found that the doctoral student experience, for home students as well as international students, can create a change in perspective as the researcher's identity changes as they undertake research to create new knowledge. This phenomenon has been compared to 'liminality' (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969) and may actually be heightened for international students as they may concurrently experience culture shock whilst doing their doctoral research (Keefer, 2015, p.18). Research also shows that the research structure that they are involved in, such as the 'Teamwork' structure in the natural sciences and an 'Individualist' structure in the social sciences (Chiang, 2003), has

an effect on the doctoral student experience (Delamont, Atkinson and Parry, 2000; Chiang, 2003; Janta, Lugosi and Brown, 2014).

Furthermore, there are many students in Britain who suffer anxiety due to situations of war or violence in their home country (Khozaei et al., 2015). This is unarguably a stressful factor, especially given that international students may also encounter negative judgements of their national culture within the host society which pushes them to react in some manner. Brown and Brown (2013) found that such challenges to national self-image as they experienced derogation of their home country led students to either re-identify with their culture of origin, ally with 'the West', resist the 'discourse of western supremacy' or agree with stigma. They describe one international student's choice to put pressure on her daughter to assimilate to English norms in terms of food, religion and language. Here it appears as though actively aiming to shed their national identity, and assimilating, was the way to be accepted (Brown and Brown, 2013). There are many similarities between the intention of both integration and intercultural approaches in the policy context and 'internationalisation' in the university context and which will be discussed in the following section.

3.5. Interculturalism and the internationalisation agenda

Cantle (2013) proposes that in the present era of super diversity, as migrants move between a broader range of countries, we ought not to consider 'identity' as something static:

Identities have generally been discussed as though they are fixed and given, rather than transitory and chosen... Those who are able to travel to many countries and can connect via the Internet to a worldwide information system [are] far more able to exercise real choice and far more likely to reform and change their ideas about identity. (Cantle, 2013, p.30)

Studying the social lives of international students allows us an insight into this shift as their social life is demonstrably not confined by nation-state boundaries and their identity may

change over the course of their sojourn experience. 'Interculturalism' is presented by Cattle as a solution for coping with 'ever-changing patterns of diversity and hybrid identities' (2013, p.31) as multicultural policies are not able to cope with globalisation and super-diversity. Interculturalism, as Cattle indicates, is sympathetic to those who may have a hybrid identity and integration is seen as a process rather than an outcome.

Internationalisation has developed into a key element of UK HE, which has gone beyond recruiting more international students and offering UK degree programmes overseas, and now involves the preparation of all students in UK HE to learn about and give back to an internationally connected society (Higher Education Academy, 2015). The commonly accepted definition of 'internationalisation' is that of Knight (2004), 'The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2004, p.11). Comparing this with Cattle's definition of interculturalism as being 'about changing mind-sets by creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity...about thinking, planning and acting interculturally' (Cattle, 2012, p.16) we can see the similarities. Within the community cohesion discourse (Cattle, 2001, 2008), integration is seen as a two-way process. If we apply that to the international student context, the host society as well as the host university has the ability to ensure maximum opportunity for international students to access information and resources, whilst all international students are also able to, and expected to, take control of their own integration processes.

Internationalisation in higher education can be seen as an illustration of how the two-way effort towards integration works in practice, as it has been suggested that an internationalised curriculum could go some way in improving interactions between international and home students:

Internationalisation of the formal and the informal curriculum provides the levers we need to ensure that interaction between international and domestic students is supported, enacted, and rewarded as an integral part of the total student experience. (Leask, 2009, p.220)

The university campus is certainly an important arena in which interactions occur.

Indeed, the university as a common institution is an example of good practice, of the 'right kind of multiculturalism' (Modood, 2007) as the internationalisation agenda promotes Gray's (2000) aforementioned idea of liberal toleration.

A further example of similarity between the policy discourse of integration and academic interventions to foster integration can be found if we look at the US model of 'supplemental instruction' developed by Martin et al. (1983) with a view to decreasing drop-out rates of minority students. This has been adopted for use in the UK higher education system under the name 'Peer assisted study sessions' (PASS). The main function is to utilise the experiences of higher year students in supporting the learning and transition of new students. This is a well-known method in universities to help international students with their transition and integration (Abe, Talbot and Geelhoed, 1998; Campbell, 2011) and it largely resembles the types of mentoring or 'buddy' schemes that are recommended in the integration policy literature (Goodhart, 2013; APPG, 2017). In the absence of such schemes, there is a policy assumption in UKHE that informal networks amongst research students allow informal learning to take place, along with the attainment of skills and information (QAA, 2012). Rutter, in her report for the Institute for Public Policy Research (Rutter, 2013) discusses what an 'effective integration policy' might look like and pays much-needed attention to international students as a group of temporary migrants, alluding to the favourable conditions that they have such as an assumed language fluency and a generally supportive environment on campus.

Yet, whilst many international students may find support in the university setting, the literature still points to consistent dissatisfaction as some international students'

expectations of forming friendships with British people are not met (Harrison and Peacock, 2008; Brown, 2009a; Walsh, 2010; Hendrickson, Rosen and Aune, 2010; Rienties et al., 2014). There may be some conflict between international students' desire to form friendships with UK students and their taking action to make this happen (Wright and Schartner, 2013) which is hardly surprising when we look at cases such as Brown's ethnographic research (2009a) which highlights stories of postgraduate students' disappointment with their lack of host-national friendship formation. Brown suggests that the absence of contact with the host community can be blamed on the indifference of local people, as well as racism, as her study found that international students encountered verbal and physical racial abuse in the streets. Instances such as these contribute to international students choosing to form co-national friendship groups.

We also find examples of irony in the literature. The qualitative work of Brown (2009a, 2009b) has highlighted that host friendships are frequently sought for practical reasons, as local people are thought of as a good resource for learning language and culture. Yet at the same time, even in the absence of prejudice, it is suggested that a blend of cultural differences and language issues hinders the formation of international / home student friendship ties (Brown, 2008; Harrison and Peacock, 2008). There is a dichotomous situation in which friendships with co-nationals play an important part in easing loneliness, yet they are also thought to contribute to the lack of effort to seek friendships with people outside of the 'ghetto' (Sawir et al, 2008; Brown, 2009b; Brown and Richards, 2012). Consequences of this range from dissatisfaction with the sojourn experience to missed opportunities to further their language practice with local people.

The culture-crossing networks of international students, and indeed economic migrants, are of great importance in towns and cities. Wood and Landry (2008) focus on the

'diversity advantage' of our neighbourhoods, towns and cities. They argue that we ought to take advantage of the valuable resources found as a result of Britain's increasing diversity, and strive to create the 'intercultural city' rather than the 'multicultural city of fragmented differences' (Wood and Landry, 2008, p.14). There has long been an assumption that international students could act as 'intercultural mediators' on campus (De Wit, 1995). Brown (2009b) states that 'the international sojourn carries the power to produce the intercultural mediator, but... this potential was fulfilled by only a handful of exceptionally motivated students' (p.192). It is often recommended in the literature that universities seek to promote intercultural exchange and to develop programmes specifically designed to increase acceptance and respect across cultures (Brown, 2009b).

Most research on student satisfaction has concentrated on the effects of the 'internal environment' of universities (Arambewela and Hall, 2013), yet off-campus activities have been found to enable greater integration, helping to create a positive perception of the UK and of the universities themselves as international education institutions (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp and Woodfield, 2013). Arambewela and Hall (2013) suggest that interventions such as guidance on how to 'build community relationships' as well as better signposting to external sources of support could go some way in improving student satisfaction. Furthermore, greater on-going practical support aimed at international students before their degree programme commences, or even creating opportunities for them to meet with people from the local area is encouraged (Wright and Schartner, 2013). The two-way effort of integration is alluded to in the literature, and it is seen as equally important that the university takes a proactive stance in encouraging members of the local community to interact with its international students. Some suggest that community engagement could also take the form of work placement opportunities as international

students certainly value the extra lengths that universities go to in order to try and foster integration (Maudeni, 2001; Owens and Loomes, 2010).

On campus, it is my experience that universities often act to intervene in the integration experience of all students and one way they do this is by supporting the formation of student societies. These can be based upon any kind of common interest and country-based student societies are encouraged to promote diversity on campus and allow the formation of co-national support networks for international students. As we have seen in the literature however, such sources of social capital are seen to be problematic when these strong bonding co-national friendship networks prevent students from seeking multi-national friendships. Yet involvement in these student societies is positive at the beginning of the journey, giving students the opportunity to make friends and gain social support, which assists with transition (Bochner et al., 1977; Menzies and Barron, 2014; Bethel et al., 2016). In the academic sense, these informal networks are known to create opportunities for international students to engage in academic discussion, and even monitor their own progress in comparison with their peers (Pilbeam, Lloyd-Jones and Denyer, 2012; Fotovatian and Miller, 2014).

3.6. Chapter conclusion

As the present and previous chapters have demonstrated, integration is discussed in the academic and policy arenas as an outcome as well as a process. Most agree that integration-as-outcome is largely achieved when people are interacting and participating in the area where they live; economically, socially and civically, and when they can meet their basic needs such as food, accommodation and healthcare. More recently, the OECD and European Union (2015) have suggested civic engagement as a further outcome indicator of integration. Though useful, these 'indicators', seen within the wider model proposed by

Ager and Strang (2004; 2008) are not entirely adequate for the study's participants and therefore this study needs to create its own framework, based on the discussion in Chapters Two and Three, in order to analyse the particular integration experiences of the case-study participants.

The political approaches to measuring integration as an outcome are clearly problematic when we observe international students as a group of migrants as they might not 'achieve' integration due to the nature of their sojourn and restrictions on their visa. Access to employment, for example, is seen as an outcome measure of integration, yet international students cannot fulfil this due to official limits on their working hours. Furthermore, it is known that most international students do intend to return home and might not wish, nor have the opportunity, to achieve outcomes such as 'confidently engaging in society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship' (Ager and Strang, 2004, p.5) as this is aimed at those wishing to settle permanently. The academic approaches to measuring integration in the international student context often focus on their satisfaction with their sojourn experience, their interaction with home students or their involvement with student societies. These are important factors related to their on-campus experience, yet they fall short in addressing their wider, external, social experiences.

The integration-as-process policy discourse mostly puts the onus on the migrant to 'do' the integrating, for example to adhere to British values, to learn English and to take part in community cohesion activities. For international students, studies focus on how they seek to learn the ways of being and doing in the British higher education system, how they build networks, who they turn to for help or how they interact in the classroom. Many in the policy and academic sphere see integration as a two-way process - albeit a very complex process. Each individual has his or her own 'path' towards participation. Social networks

provide substantial psychological and social support and a sense of belonging in a new community, whilst also serving to reinforce identity and recognition. This chapter has established the notion of social capital as a resource that can be mobilised through one's social contacts, an important factor in the integration discourse. Given that the integration of international students and the role of social capital in this has been given barely any attention in the academic or policy discourse, one of the research aims of this study is to interrogate how the integration experiences of a case study group of international students relate to the network theory of social capital as discussed here.

This chapter has also discussed international students as migrants and integration as a complex concept, especially given the technological possibilities of keeping a 'virtual co-presence' of friends and family wherever we might be in the world. Hyper-connectivity supports transnationalism, and both notions are pertinent to the present study. These concepts bring into question what integration means in the borderless social worlds that international students inhabit. This in turn also has an effect on the concept of identity as it applies to mobile populations such as international students, as their transnational experiences mean that they are more likely to have fluid ideas about identity. The internationalisation of higher education has been likened in this chapter to the community cohesion approach of interculturalism, yet the literature still shows evidence of isolation and loneliness amongst some international students, and the desire yet failure to make local social contacts.

Through reviewing the key discourses surrounding integration, mapping the key aspects of Britain's changing approaches over the years (Chapter Two) and discussing social capital and international students as migrants (present chapter), I conclude that, to answer the proposed research questions, micro-level integration can be examined by carefully

considering an individual's *interaction and participation* in society. There are many structural and personal factors that help, hinder and interplay with an individual's interaction and participation and therefore affect their integration experiences.

Structural factors include local and the national domains. For example, ethnic diversity in the local area or when visiting different towns and cities, the extent to which the local area affords them the opportunity to re-create their social practices, experiences of discrimination and the atmosphere of tolerance amongst the local or national community, local opportunities for intercultural contact, the individual's experience of the visa application process and the interventions to foster integration found at the host university.

Personal factors might include how much the individual can relate to the British ways of being and doing that they observe, the individual's own interactions with the British people, how they observe the local culture and the extent of the individual's sense of belonging. Central to all of this is the individual's social capital; the nature of it, how they build it through their interactions and how they mobilise it to enable their own participation. The factors listed here, visualised in Appendix 1, are intended as an analytical framework and will be used to structure the discussion in Chapters Six to Eight.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

By reviewing and synthesising previous studies focused on international students, as well as the literature in the broader field of migration studies, an important gap in knowledge has been identified; That which examines the societal, rather than academic, integration experiences of international students in relation to policy and academic discourses of integration. To address this, the present study will firstly investigate the nature of the social networks and social interactions of a case study sample of international students. From there, it will critically evaluate the experiences of these international students in the context of theoretical and policy discourses of integration, within the framework set out in the previous chapter, and interrogate how their integration experiences relate to key understandings of social capital. To reiterate, the specific research questions that were asked in the context of a case-study sample of international students' experiences were:

1. What is the nature of their social networks and social interactions?
2. How do their experiences relate to the discourses of integration?
3. How do their integration experiences relate to understandings of social capital?

This is a qualitative study as it seeks to elucidate the lived experiences and perceptions of its participants. The present chapter will identify and justify the factors that influenced the study in terms of the practical and theoretical approaches taken to gathering and analysing the research data. As a research student (although not an international student) and as somebody who has had a broad experience of working with international students I am inextricably involved with the study's participants. When being reflexive therefore I will use the first person pronoun. At other times whilst forming an objective argument, I will revert to the third person. Next, the chapter will present and justify Heidegger's (1927/2010)

phenomenology as the chosen research methodology before describing the participants and case study university and its location. The chapter will then critically discuss and rationalise the multiple methods of data collection employed and explain and justify how the data analysis was carried out. Some reflections on key lessons learnt during the pilot study are included in order to demonstrate how the pilot phase shaped some important decisions made during the main study.

4.2. A phenomenological case study

This study is concerned with the lived experiences of its participants and therefore takes a qualitative stance, using the researcher's understanding of interpretive phenomenology as a methodology to drive data collection and analysis. Traditional phenomenologists such as Husserl (1970) and Crotty (1998) would suggest that the phenomenological researcher suspends her own cultural structure of meaning in order to comprehend the perspectives of her research participants from a position of 'bracketing' (Husserl, 1970), yet this is very difficult to do especially for researchers such as myself who have spent years working in the area of investigation. Actually, this type of subjective knowledge, according to the hermeneutic phenomenology tradition, is both advantageous and vital to phenomenological research. A core notion behind the interpretive phenomenological approach is that the prior experience of the researcher is of value (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Indeed, it was the anecdotal evidence I had heard during my time working with international students combined with extensive reading of literature in the field (Gregory, 2013) that led me to believe there was a need for intervention in terms of their integration needs.

The qualitative, interpretive paradigm is a broad 'world view' (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002) which suits my own ontological position, that there are many subjective 'truths' or

'realities'. The present study has a focus on integration at the micro level, and will examine the nuances of integration that can only be sought through analysing the personal accounts of the participants. Experiences of integration at the individual level cannot be quantified. Nor for that matter can social capital. The ways in which the participants build their networks and mobilise the resultant social capital resources are multifarious and can be comprehended best through careful qualitative analysis. Given that the nature of the present study is centred around 'experience', the positivistic stance - that the world is made up of observable facts - would have been inappropriate. The positivist paradigm is associated with measurable, quantitative enquiry and seeks to find a general overarching truth, whereas in the present study the participants' accounts are analysed separately to find the essence of integration of each of them.

Yin (2009) outlines three main motivations for choosing a case study approach; To explore, to describe or to explain. The present study constitutes a situated case study because it has enabled the researcher to answer the research questions, whilst taking into account how the participants' integration experiences are influenced by the local social context (Yin, 2009). It seems obvious that re-enacting the same type of study with participants from a different university town or city would generate much different results. For example, the diversity of the local population changes throughout the UK, with some areas being more diverse than others and this has an impact on local attitudes to immigration and opportunities for integration. Furthermore, the experience of living in a big city would be different again to that of living in a university town. This particular case study is explorative, given that it is concerned with the fundamental question of how the experiences of the participants in one particular locality relate to the broader discourses of integration.

The phenomenological approach recognises the interpretative nature of knowledge as it seeks to understand the subjective experience of a group of purposively selected individuals (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological methodology sees 'perception' as the foundation of knowledge. It assumes that 'reality' is subjective and therefore manifold. This means that occasionally there is a conflict between the differing constructs of reality as each participant describes their own reality through their lived experience. Not only does phenomenology fit my own accordance with 'subjective reality' but it also fits well with the complex notion of integration; As discussed in the previous chapter, some understandings of integration focus on perception. Crucially, it is the subjective reality of each individual participant that gives meaning to 'integration' in this study and using a phenomenological framework has provided a basis to allow the interpretation and description of their integration experience. Throughout, I have sought to illuminate the experiences of the participants by analytically presenting their stories in their own words whilst refraining from making suppositions about the 'truth' of their experiences. Rather, as will be presented in the final chapter, I have endeavoured to reach a final resolution by describing the 'essence' of their experience in the context of the framework set out in Chapter Three.

Phenomenology falls broadly into the two strands; descriptive and interpretive. In the descriptive domain, Husserl's early 20th century philosophical position regarding scientific inquiry was that human experience as perceived by the individual is of scientific value (1901/1970). Husserl considered subjective information as important for those pursuing an understanding of human motivation, largely since human actions are influenced by what humans in their consciousness *perceive to be true*. Husserl advocated research in which the human lived experience of specific phenomena is grasped. A principal assumption of Husserl (1901/1970) is that there are commonalities shared by all individuals experiencing

any given phenomenon and that these commonalities must be recognised so that the 'essence' of the experience can be described.

Heidegger built upon the foundations of Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, and further asserted that the 'lifeworld', meaning the social, political and cultural issues surrounding the individual, is a central factor in scientific inquiry (1927/2010). Heidegger argued that the individual subjective experience is unavoidably influenced by the world we inhabit, using the phrase 'being-in-the-world' to emphasise his point. The difference between this and Husserl's methodology is that Heidegger sought to interpret the narratives of the individuals in relation to their current socio-cultural and political context (Heidegger, 1927/2010). The underlying assumption here is that whilst individuals consciously know what they know, they do not critique their own experience in relation to their lifeworld, yet it is their lifeworld that influences the commonalities shared by them as a group of research participants and therefore it is the job of the researcher to take this into account.

The notion of 'situated freedom' is of relevance to the present study's methodology (Parse, 1998). Situated freedom sits in the middle ground between Sartre's absolute freedom (2003); the sense that our consciousness determines our individual future, and the notion of determinism, which posits that events are set to happen by cause and effect and are determined by the past. Situated freedom is the idea that individuals are free to choose their life path, but that their life path is influenced by environmental (e.g. social, cultural, political) factors. Whereas Husserl argued that it was sufficient enough to describe the perceived world of the individual, Heidegger's stance took into account the environmental influences, or lifeworld of the individual, in line with the idea of situated freedom. In the present study, analysis will take into account the political, cultural and social factors in the local case study environment, hence it is more in line with Heidegger's interpretative

phenomenology than Husserl's descriptive phenomenology (1901/1970). Known as 'hermeneutic phenomenology', this interpretive rather than descriptive approach encourages the use of a conceptual framework such as the one presented in the previous chapter, in order to focus the research and allow a frame of reference for the researcher.

4.3. Participants and case study institution

The principle phenomenon of interest in the present study was operationalised as *the integration experiences of international students in the UK*. An additional phenomenon of interest was the multiple ways in which international students developed social ties and how this interplays with their integration experience. Although Kaufman (2016) suggests that the debate surrounding integration has given far too much attention to 'stories' and not enough to hard data, there has been very little research focus on the nexus between the lived experiences of international students and integration policy. Thus, this study can be considered an exploratory one which is further justification that qualitative accounts are deemed appropriate. It was important to select people who have all experienced the same phenomenon and for whom the research questions are significant. The literature indicates that two to ten participants are regarded a sufficient number, if interviewed multiple times, to reach 'saturation' for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007). Smith et al. (2009) suggest:

Participants are selected on the basis that they can grant us access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study. That is, they represent a perspective, rather than a population. (p.156).

There is however a persistent epistemological conflict in that, on the one hand it is intended here to illuminate the individual stories as told through the subjective experience of the participants. I maintain that subjective truths can and ought to be considered as knowledge, especially where research on 'experience' is concerned such as in the present study. However, when there is a frequent occurrence of similar subjective truths across participants in a study of this type, this knowledge is even more 'useable' as a truth, hence

more defensible as a tool to build an evidence base from the participants' individual stories and in turn recommend policy change. Ultimately, the phenomenological approach embraces the idea that multiple perspectives are required in order to explore prospective answers to the research questions. The fundamental aim of phenomenology, as with that of the present study, is to condense these experiences into a representation of the phenomenon in question.

Issues of anti-essentialism and transnationalism as discussed in Chapters Two and Three are central to this study. It is necessary to draw attention to this again in the methodological context, since these factors contribute towards the importance of avoiding methodological nationalism in the selection of the case study sample of international students (Modood, 1998; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). An essentialist outlook would be one that expects the experiences of individuals sharing a nationality to be very closely comparable, regardless of the individual or personal context. An anti-essentialist stance has been taken throughout this research, one that is careful not to generalise about a whole group based on their country of origin and as such I have been cautious to avoid 'methodological nationalism' which, according to Wimmer and Glick Schiller, is:

...the naturalisation of the nation-state by the social sciences. Scholars who share this intellectual orientation assume that countries are the natural units for comparative studies, equate society with the nation-state, and conflate national interests with the purposes of social science. (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003, p.576)

That is not to say that cultural background has no influence on the individual students' experience; On the contrary, it was evident during the interviews that most participants see themselves firmly as nationals of their home country. Often, they spoke about personal religious practices and political issues relating to their country. Whilst these issues are of clear importance in influencing their worldview, it was beyond the intention of the present study to focus on this in great detail. It may therefore appear to the reader that the discussion is limited where it could have been extended at times. Importantly, the

transitions that they are experiencing and the intersectionality of their identity also means that they see themselves as young, old, male, female, international student, researcher, professional, Muslim, nonreligious, loner, socialite, and on it goes, sometimes foregrounding certain aspects of their identity over others depending on the topic of discussion.

As a further justification for choosing a range of participants, I found it useful to consider how Montgomery and MacDowell (2009) defend their research on international students as a group: 'Issues of nationality and culture can lead to misjudgements or stereotyping and thus it was decided to choose these students across nationality' (p. 457). Clearly, the profile of the participants was a critical aspect of the research design and participants were carefully chosen so that no particular ethnicity, gender, faith or specialist subject was over-represented. The study included an even balance of male and female postgraduate research students. Research students were chosen in particular because they are more likely to spend three to four years in Britain, whereas taught Master's students spend only one year and most undergraduates at the case study university arrive in the final year of the degree as 'top-up' students. Choosing participants with a longer time living in Britain was thought to generate richer and more significant data regarding integration, because they have more time to reflect on their experiences.

The participants were from Bulgaria, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Myanmar, China, India, Nigeria and Iraq. They were also based across different subject disciplines and university departments thus had different social networks, which adds to the significance of any recurrent themes. Bearing these criteria in mind, in order to 'recruit' participants I approached potential 'insiders' as well as advertising the project (King and Horrocks,

2010) and a purposive sample was selected from those who responded. The participants in the present study fulfilled the following inclusion criteria:

1. Current research student at the university
2. Moved to the UK from a different country specifically to study
3. Previously unknown to the researcher

All participants were asked to choose their own pseudonym, a task which they enjoyed and gave a lot of thought to. Some chose a name that they liked the sound of whilst others named themselves after their best friends. One chose the name of his favourite fictional character. The purpose of assigning them this job was to promote an 'egalitarian relationship' between researcher and participant (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). Other measures taken to this end are discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The host community chosen for this case study is 'Hilltown' in the north of England. The geographical positioning of the university is of high significance for a number of reasons. The area is superdiverse with large Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Kurdish, Indian, Caribbean and African communities. It is approximately 80% White British so when thinking about integration in a 'host society' it is essential that we question what that means at the local level, as will be revealed in later chapters. Related to this, Hilltown is near the sites of the aforementioned 'race riots' of 2001, which were blamed on the idea that the communities were living entirely separate lives. Cohesion across the local authority district that includes Hilltown is not good overall and has been found to have lower satisfaction than other parts of the country. Community tensions are much worse in some areas than others, with the town centre having better cohesion than the outer suburbs, which potentially had a significant effect on some findings as discussed in later chapters. Regarding the university

itself, it is active in its recruitment of international students in recent years and its international office includes a number of staff dedicated to the social, pastoral and academic support of international students. At the time of the study, international students make up around 17% of overall student numbers. In order to gain a situated perspective, two more key informants were selected purposively. The Community Cohesion Manager for Hilltown Council was interviewed for his insights into local community cohesion work and the scope for including international students in this. The International Marketing Manager at the university was interviewed for his insights into the university context, as he was known by me as being actively involved in the on-campus social activities of international students.

An often-agreed limitation of the case study approach is that it is not feasible to generalise from a single case (Creswell, 2007) and even less so from a qualitative interpretive case study. De Saint-Georges (2018) points out however, that whether a piece of research is deemed generalisable or not largely depends on our understanding of 'generalisation', and suggests that the potentially very significant aspects of case-study research are at risk of being understated due to anxieties about the generalisability of case-study findings. Tsang (2014) defines generalisation in empirical research, as 'an act of inferring from specific, observed instances, such as those in a case setting, to general statements.' (p. 371). In qualitative enquiry, the presence of recurrent themes is essential in order to create a working theory, or 'theoretical generalisation', given that theory intends to explain general phenomena rather than unique events (Tsang, 2014). Yin (2018) refers to this as 'analytic generalization', which he defines as 'consisting of a carefully posed theoretical statement, theory, or theoretical proposition. The generalization can take the form of a lesson learned, working hypothesis, or other principle that is believed to be applicable to other situations' (p.37). Whilst it has been established that in this paradigm there is no one accurate

interpretation (Crotty, 1998) but multiple possible interpretations, the study has found collective themes in the experiences of the participants and therefore common implications that might be transferred across to other groups of international research students in the UK and beyond. Theoretical generalisability is suggested as the reader is able to evaluate the findings in the context of their own work with international students (Smith et al., 2009, Yin, 2018) and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine.

The data generated from the social network mapping, and explored further during the interviews has allowed the researcher to identify how international students describe their social bonds and integration experiences, and to locate these findings within the literature on social capital and the discourses of integration. This has contributed to a deeper understanding of the experiences of international students in relation to the theories of social capital and discourses of integration. It is therefore suggested that this study can add to the literature and knowledge base around social capital theory, to the concept of integration and to the evidence base around international students' experiences. From this the researcher is able to offer recommendations for policymakers and key staff working with international students. It is intended that this research will highlight the perceptions of international students through their stories, to gain an insight into their experiences and, ultimately, to make recommendations that may have a positive impact during their time in the UK.

4.3.1. Methodological considerations

A significant methodological challenge was that the participants and the researcher did not speak the same native language. Interviews were conducted in English as this is the universal language of the case-study institution. Although they were all very proficient in English, at times some participants visibly struggled to translate their thoughts into the

right English words. Not only this, but some apologised that they felt they were not expressing themselves clearly enough. Whilst I gave them time and space to formulate their thoughts, it must be noted as a limitation and as such the data generated may have been richer had they been given the choice to speak in their most fluent language and their accounts interpreted before analysis. During the analysis and interpretation of the interview data, I was drawn to the work of Kehily (1995) and her notion of 'well worn stories we tell about ourselves' (p.24). Kehily suggests that during a significant period of our lives, we reflect and work on summing up the experience so that it becomes a 'ready-made narrative' that we can tell to those who take an interest. Importantly, Kehily observes that we tend to edit and reconstruct parts of our anecdote to suit the audience. It occurred to me during the interview process that often the participants began their answers quite quickly when asked a question, and it is possible that they were tapping into a ready-made narrative that they had already formulated about their experience. Whilst this does not necessarily alter the 'subjective truth' that I was looking for, it is fair to say that using, for example, an ethnographic approach or alternative methods such as diary-writing would have generated different data.

It has been claimed that research participants may be less willing to speak honestly to researchers from other ethnic or racial groups when asked about 'racial' topics (Gunaratnam, 2003). In the present study, many of the participants were of different race / ethnicity to the researcher, which is important to consider as a methodological issue. The main claim is that the 'racialised difference' between participant and researcher could potentially affect the fullness of the participants' accounts. There were indeed times during the interviews when I sensed a couple of the participants were recounting a polite version of their experience, or holding back from being negative. I discuss this later on in the analysis chapters. To get around this, many studies practice 'ethnic matching' whereby the

participants and interviewer are matched, an approach that has been found to be successful (Daniel, 1969, cited in Gunaratnam, 2003) yet also criticised by Gunaratnam (2003), as there are many categories of difference between interviewer and interviewee, and paying attention to ethnic differences alone may run the risk of overlooking other forms of power-inequality.

In any case, ethnic matching was not a feasible option in the present study in which I was the sole researcher. Gunaratnam argues that ‘*all* interviews take place within a context of social divisions’ such as ‘race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexuality and disability’ (Original emphasis, Ch 3, conclusions). I have considered this and made sure I have given continual and critical analytic attention and reflection throughout the interview and analysis process, as will be discussed at various points throughout Chapters Five to Eight.

4.4. Methods of data collection

It has long been recommended in studies of this nature to provide an independent audit trail, in order to demonstrate the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the methods of data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009; Thomson, 2014). This section will firstly detail the research methods that were used to fulfil the aims of the study, before discussing the merits of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a sound and relevant data analysis method.

In the semantic sense there is a long-standing debate about the basic definitions of multiple methods, multimethod and mixed methods designs, causing confusion when trying to find a label for the research design. The conclusion reached, with the help of Tashakkori and Teddlie (2012) is that ‘multiple methods’ is an overarching term, encapsulating both ‘mixed methods’ designs (mixing quantitative and qualitative data

collection procedures) and 'multimethod' designs (using different data collection methods but restricted to one worldview, i.e. qualitative or quantitative.) This study took a multi-staged and multi-method approach to data collection (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2012). Data was collected during one academic year, with the principle qualitative collection method being in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten participants. Student sojourners are deemed to have particularly powerful emotional experiences at the beginning of the academic sojourn as they are required to adjust to their new situation (Brown, 2009a). With this in mind it was decided that data collection took place throughout a full year of study, as retrospective accounts could be considered along with any new data that emerged. Three interviews with each participant were arranged, not to measure changes over time but rather to have a continuing dialogue in three parts. Each participant was interviewed three times, with interviews lasting between sixty and ninety minutes. In November, a pilot study was conducted and important lessons learnt before the main study design was finalised and commenced in January. This will now be discussed.

4.4.1. Pilot study: Reflections and lessons learnt

This section will describe how the study was influenced by my reflections after conducting a pilot study. Two international students were interviewed three times each. The pilot study had two main purposes. Firstly, in order to improve my skills at using social network mapping software, conducting an initial 'practice' using real participants was essential. Secondly, it was important to test the process of using the data from the mapping phase to give an initial focus for the in-depth interviews as well as drawing attention to any issues that may not have been anticipated. The aims of conducting a pilot study were to practise collaborative social network mapping with participants, to practise using real data with social network analysis visualisation software, to test and refine interview questions and to gain an insight into the way in which 'integration' might be perceived. The pilot study

resulted in some important lessons and therefore changes to the originally proposed methods.

Firstly, during the pilot study, Post-it notes in four different colours were given to the participants: *Student from home country*; *Student from UK*; *Other international student*; *Non-student*. This did not allow for the participants to name their friends and family from their home country. Home-country contacts are an extremely important source of support for students during their sojourn, and the ways in which they keep in contact opens up a valuable line of discussion regarding transnational social spaces and their social networks. The category of home-country contacts was therefore used in the main study.

Secondly, two participants agreed to my following them on Facebook over the course of the pilot study. Facebook is a social networking site on which users can upload photos using their smart phone and add a caption if they choose. It was anticipated that the observations of participants' online activities would be useful in generating questions for subsequent interviews. I observed the participants' activities on Facebook, but did not find the information suitable for the present study. There is a superficial aspect to social media; that perhaps users tend to use it to highlight the most exciting aspects of their lives, thereby giving a false impression to the observer. For example, there were numerous photos where the participants were shown in restaurants and bars because their friends had posted photos of them having a 'good time'. This contrasted with the participants interview accounts that they did not particularly enjoy spending time in bars. It was therefore concluded through reflection with supervisors and the participants themselves, that this type of social media, whilst making an interesting research project in itself, was not complimentary to the present study and so was discarded.

Thirdly, in advance of the pilot interviews, I emailed the participants an interview guide to help them prepare. This included a simplified description of Ager and Strang's (2008) 'measures of integration' and an outline of some questions they would be asked. During the interview, participants were asked to comment on how they perceive integration and how important it is to them to integrate in the UK and they were asked some questions about their social networks. The pilot interview guide can be seen in Appendix 2. The explicit use of the concept of integration and the definition of integration was problematic. Both participants thought they were expected to discuss the general meaning of integration rather than thinking about their own integration. Therefore, in the main study, the participants were instead asked a variety of questions, based around Ager and Strang's (2008) framework, in order to allow their perceptions of integration to emerge.

Finally, one of the participants from the pilot study emailed me afterwards to ask for help with a job application. This was thought to be because of a previous Tutor: Tutee relationship between myself and the participant and was avoided in the main study by ensuring the participants were not previously known to me.

The main study commenced four months after the pilot study. The first interview took place in a café on the university campus in November. The second interview was again on campus in a private interview room in January. The final interview was a 'walking interview' around the university town in April. The decision to use a range of data collection techniques was driven by the research questions. The first question (What is the nature of their social networks and social interactions?) requires a descriptive answer and I believed that ego network mapping would be a fruitful method. Integration is a messy and highly subjective concept and it was necessary to create multiple opportunities to discuss this in view of generating enough data about the participants' experiences to answer the second

and third research questions (How do their experiences relate to the theoretical and policy discourses of integration? How do their integration experiences relate to understandings of social capital?) These stages will now be outlined and justified.

4.4.2. Ego network mapping interviews

The first meeting was a 60-minute interview with the participant, during which time they worked with the researcher to collaboratively map their social networks and activities. During the creation of a visual map of their ‘ego-centric’ networks (Kadushin, 2004) the participants were asked to name their social contacts by writing the names on different coloured post-it notes so as to categorise them (See Table 2). The first three categories loosely correspond to the three categories of friendship ties of overseas students as discovered by Bochner et al. (1977, also see Chapter Three of the present study): 1. Host-national; 2. Co-national; 3. Multi-national. The category of ‘non-institutional contact’ was added, as this may relate to the student integrating in society and forming connections with people outside of the academic environment and the category of ‘home country contact’ was added as this is seen as a valuable source of support during the student sojourn (see section 4.4.1., present chapter, for lessons learnt during the pilot study).

1.Pink	Co-national contacts: Social contacts who are from your country and who you have met at university.
2.Green	International contacts: Social contacts who are not from your country and who are not from the UK and who you have met at university.
3.Blue	UK contacts: Social contacts who are from the UK and who you have met at university.
4.Yellow	Non-institutional contacts: Social contacts who are resident in the UK and who you have met outside the university.
5.Orange	Home country contacts: Social contacts who are resident in your home country who you are in regular contact with whilst you are here.

Table 1: Categories of contacts

In the field of social network analysis (SNA) this method is known as a 'name generator' (Kadushin, 2012) and was used here to elicit the names of those who were important to the participant and who they were in contact with during their sojourn. After participants had named their contacts they were asked to scale them in importance using the descriptors 'most important', 'important' and 'least important' in order to give a structure to the ensuing conversations. Data was visualised using the *VennMaker* software package, which is specifically designed for personal network analysis. The participants reacted well to using the maps to visualise their social networks. As the interviewer, I was able to ask contextualised questions about their social contacts as they were being placed on the map. During the subsequent discussion, I asked about the frequency and basic nature of their social interactions and where they first met their named contacts, with most focus on those deemed 'most important'. The visual data from the network mapping activity was used as an initial focus for the participants to describe their social networks. For those participants in the study who had already developed social networks and had already established regular social activities, I was able to gather their retrospective stories about how their social habits had developed over the course of their sojourn. The discussion was recorded and transcribed and significant statements were used to inform the direction of subsequent interviews. The data generated during this process allowed a useful insight into the participants' social activities overall and will be presented in Chapter Five and knitted throughout the discussion in subsequent chapters.

4.4.3. Sit-down interviews

The second stage of data collection involved single, semi-structured interviews with the student participants. Interviews also took place with two key informants from the local community; the Community Engagement and Development Officer from the local council and the International Student Experience Manager from the university international office.

The findings from these interviews were subsequently discussed with the student participants, and considered along with the social network data in order to interrogate their experiences in the context of the discourses of integration. The network maps were used as a visual reminder during the interviews and this was found to be effective in prompting the participants to describe aspects of their social lives. It is also known that visual prompts can help to create a good relationship between the researcher and interviewee, especially during cross-cultural interviewing. For researchers, the information provided in images can assist in asking relevant questions; for the participants, memories are roused differently than in question-and-answer interviews (Clarke-ibanez, 2004) and were recognised in the present study for generating natural and honest answers.

4.4.4. Walking interviews

The third and final stage involved a walk with the student participants around the university campus and the centre of Hilltown. The decision to use walking interviews was informed by the experience of stages one and two; discussing their social lives within the confines of the university campus seemed limiting and it simply made sense to venture, physically, into the 'real world'. Added to this is the fact that the study was partly inspired by the paucity of research into the non-academic, off-campus experiences of international students, so it would have been hypocritical to remain on campus for the data collection. The participants had a small microphone clipped onto their scarf or jacket to record their comments. The walking interviews followed roughly the same pre-planned route, walking past the landmark places of Hilltown whilst the participants were asked various questions about the places. For example, they were asked if they had ever been, if they would like to go, if they felt that the shops / cafés were 'inviting' places. The participants were also asked to give any general comments about things that they passed along the way and places that were important to them.

The walking interviews were very successful in generating a rich and fascinating glimpse into the perceptions of the participants whilst we walked together through the streets of Hilltown (See Appendix 3). Much like the visual methods used in the previous stages, the participants were prompted by their memories and connections to the places as they passed by and they hesitated less when answering questions. This meant that the conversation flowed very naturally. Although the decision to use a walking interview was an intuitive one, there is further evidence in the literature that 'mobile methods' have distinct methodological advantages. For example, they allow the local area, landmarks and buildings to serve as a memory trigger and enable recollection in a way that the ego-network mapping and one-to-one interview stages had not (Evans and Jones, 2008, 2011; Spinney, 2015). Of additional benefit, the photos taken along the way were useful after the events to prompt my own memory during analysis.

4.5. Data analysis

In this study, as in any qualitative, interpretive study, no one 'true' meaning can be constructed. The aim, rather, is that the analysis presented is rational and credible within the framework that was set out in the conclusion of Chapter Three, and that it represents accurately the accounts of the participants; their realities. The framework was used as a basis to interpret the study's findings, and will be referred to throughout the discussion in its findings chapters. It is important to point out that this framework did not have a biasing effect on analysing the accounts of the participants, which will be discussed in this section along with researcher reflexivity.

Creswell identifies two focused questions necessary to collect relevant data necessary for sound analysis: 'What have you experienced in terms of the Phenomenon?' and 'What

contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experience?' (Creswell, 2007, p.61). In phenomenology, the researcher must occupy herself with the phenomena under study in order to attain a thick description through analysis and interpretation. The notion of 'reflexivity' in qualitative research invites the researcher to be self-reflective. It is necessary to reflect upon how one's own prior experience and knowledge has influenced the selection and interpretation of data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). For example, it was mentioned in Chapter One, that I have a number of years' experience working with international students and have often met international students as they have come to me for help. Throughout the study I was careful not to automatically assign the participants to the role of 'help-seeker' or to compare their experiences with those of previous international students that I had known in a professional capacity. Rather, I adhered to the recurrent good-practice guidelines found in the literature that will now be discussed.

As there were a number of interviews, data transcription and analysis ran concurrently with data collection. It is important that the researcher 'analyses the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes' (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). When the participants mentioned something that was considered significant, according to the aims of the study and the conceptual framework, they were probed for further information and the interpretations checked with them before the final chapters were written. Phenomenology requires a deep focus on each participant, meeting with the participant multiple times so that a conversation can be continued after a period of reflection. The accounts of the participants in this study were analysed using the method of 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' (IPA). Smith et al. (2009) suggest that during the analysis there must be a meticulous examination of each individual case. IPA is idiographic, concerned with specifics rather than nomothetic which is concerned with generalisations. It requires a detailed understanding of the experience for each individual

participant, to be able to describe how each participant makes sense of his or her individual experiences (Smith et al., 2009). As Smith and Osborn point out:

IPA is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world. (2007, p. 55)

It is important to note that the researcher was 'interpreting the data from participants who have already interpreted their world' (Cohen et al., 2011, Ch. 28, Section 2, para. 8). In IPA this is known as a 'double hermeneutic'. As described by Smith et al., 'It can be said that the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic, because the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them.' (2009, Ch. 1, para. 10) As such, I fully immersed myself in the accounts of each participant very soon after each interview. After the initial interviews I spent some time writing an account of first impressions of each participant and how the interview went in terms of ease of communication and general flow. This information was invaluable when preparing for the subsequent interview, which concurs with the suggestions of Miles and Huberman (1994).

The individual transcripts were then scrutinised on screen so that significant statements could be categorised into basic descriptive groups. Once all participants' transcripts had been deconstructed in this way, the initial categorisations were then printed in hard copy and considered more closely so as to identify any similarities or subcategories. Being able to see an overview of which participants had spoken about which subject was extremely useful in getting an initial idea of the matters of most importance to the participants, creating a strong foundation for the subsequent interviews. Added to this were the visual network maps which offered a complete overview of the distribution of social contacts across categories.

In order to fully prepare for the second interview, I worked with paper-based, colour-printed copies of the transcripts, highlighting significant statements that could be used to probe for more information during the interview (See Appendix 4). These highlighted transcripts were present during the second interview in an effort to create an empowered role for the participants, which is an important aspect of the phenomenological approach (Smith, 1995). The transcripts served a useful purpose. They allowed clarity and order in the interview. I was able to make the interview questions reflective and personal which helped the participants feel comfortable that it was their story I was interested in, rather than their neutral view. I could begin questions with phrases such as 'last time we met, you mentioned...' or 'I remember you told me ...' which allowed them to revisit, and at times rephrase, what they had previously said. The result was that interview two flowed as a continuation of the conversation that began in interview one.

It is important to point out that all interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself, the researcher. The process of transcribing 29 hours of interview recordings took around 150 hours in total. Transcription engaged me in a careful scrutiny of data through repeated listening. This was the essential first step in the data analysis process. The familiarity with the interview data, along with the recent memory of the non-verbal clues during the interview was imperative to the development of ideas during analysis.

4.5.1. Conceptual analysis of integration and social capital

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the visionary, measurable and outcome-based way of discussing integration is popular in the policy context and methods of measuring cohesion tend to be surveys which are based on subjective perceptions. As already discussed, Ager and Strang (2004) laid out an 'indicators of integration' framework, which proposed that an individual is integrated in society when they:

Achieve public outcomes in terms of employment, housing, education, health etc., which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; Are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; Have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship. (Adapted from Ager and Strang, 2004, p.5)

This study is concerned with integration at the individual micro level and it was deemed necessary to reflect on each individual participant's accounts of their social activities in order to focus on what integration means to them specifically. Although it is positivistic in the sense that it seeks to measure and categorise integration, Ager and Strang's framework was useful as it contributed to the development of the study's framework and assisted in the job of asking personalised questions around the concept of integration, such as questions about housing, healthcare, education, employment and social activities (Ager and Strang, 2008) so that the students' perceptions of integration were allowed to emerge in a meaningful way.

An inductive approach to data analysis is one where the researcher looks at the data to develop ideas and themes from it, with no preconception or expectation about what the data will reveal. An inductive approach was intended in the present study, yet as mentioned above the prior experience of the researcher also plays a role in the analytical process. It is important to acknowledge that there were times when I could relate to the stories of the participants, as somebody who has lived overseas. Owing to the conversational nature of the interviews, it is entirely possible that I might have responded enthusiastically to the accounts that I could relate to, thereby unintentionally prompting the participant to focus on some aspects over others according to my reactions. Yin (2018) calls this 'reflexive threat', whereby 'Your perspective unknowingly influences the interviewee's responses, but those responses also unknowingly influence your line of inquiry. The result is an undesirable coloring of the interview material.' (p.120). I followed Yin's advice and defined my priorities about what to interpret. Those priorities were largely

defined by the nature of the integration discourse, hence the importance of the conceptual framework as outlined above.

There is an obvious emphasis on the important role of social connections in the integration process, hence the need to apply a social capital lens to the present study's findings. It is not possible to neatly gauge or quantify social capital, indeed this study is not concerned with measuring social capital - It can only attempt to describe the participants' experiences and relate this to existing theory, aiming to add to our understanding of social capital.

Social capital can be explored and visualised by studying friendship networks and social network analysis (SNA) is a relatively new way of visualising and analysing these types of networks. SNA methods can visualise a whole social network, for example showing the connections between all the students who join a certain student society, meaning that the analyst can see the connections between people beyond those with whom the subject has immediate access. Egocentric networks are different to this, as they are concerned with the network of an individual, with the individual being placed in the centre of the network 'map'.

Using the concept of ego network analysis in this study allowed the researcher to gain an important insight into how the participants formed their social connections and the distribution of friends across different categories. SNA is commonly known as a statistical tool for analysing large amounts of quantitative data although there is an emerging focus on the use of qualitative data in SNA, especially focused on ego networks such as those of the participants that have been used in the present study. Hollstein (2011) posits that qualitative methods in social network analysis offer special tools for confronting some of the problems encountered in social network research, for example they help to examine the link between network structure and the individuals in the network by allowing the

researcher to ask nuanced questions relating to the formation and dynamics of the social network in question.

4.5.2. Quality assurance and ethics

Smith et al. (2009) suggest how Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis can meet Yardley's (2000) criteria for assessing the quality of this type of research, and these criteria will now be briefly discussed in relation to the present study. Firstly, Yardley posits that the researcher must demonstrate sensitivity to the context of the study. I have lived, studied and worked in the host town and institution for a number of years as well as having been an overseas student during my undergraduate studies. I have also engaged closely with the literature, gaining a good insight of the previous studies involving international students as well as theories of acculturation, integration and adjustment in the field of migrant studies. Moreover, the later chapters of the thesis include a substantial number of verbatim statements from each participant to allow the reader to hear their voices and check for him/herself the interpretations that have been made (Smith et al., 2009).

Secondly, Yardley emphasises the importance of commitment and rigour; that there is a large degree of attentiveness to the data as well as thoroughness of the study. This has been demonstrated by repeated interaction with the participants, allowing them to be involved after the interviews by checking the final interpretations with them. Various methods of data collection were used and the final interpretation tells the reader something of importance to the participants as well as the themes they share (Smith et al., 2009).

Yardley's third principle is transparency and coherence. Transparency is demonstrated in the present chapter, which offers a comprehensive description, an 'audit trail', of the methods used in the study.

Finally, Yardley rightly proposes that good qualitative research needs to have importance and impact. As a doctoral research project, this study is intended to offer an original contribution to knowledge and this is defended in the final chapter.

The ethical guidelines published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) were also considered throughout the fieldwork and analysis of data. The main ethical issues that were noted were confidentiality, anonymity and cultural sensitivity. BERA (2011) emphasises that research participants ought to be fully informed before they participate, and that they are free to decide for themselves if they wish to take part free from pressure. Participants were transparently told the research aims and processes and informed that they would be recorded during our meetings. It was also made clear that they were under no obligation and could withdraw at any time. Ethical matters such as these were arguably made less problematic as participants were all research students themselves and therefore had a good grasp of the research process. In terms of confidentiality, I had sole access to the interview recordings and transcripts and anonymised all data during transcription.

The relationship between the researcher and the researched is significant. During data collection and analysis I was a full-time research student and was not working with international students in a professional capacity, therefore the participants were hitherto unknown to me. Having said that, I was able to draw upon previous experience to appreciate the potential ethical issues that may arise. For example, overseas students could be under a great deal of pressure for varying reasons. Any signs of distress during the research were carefully monitored and steps were taken at all times to put them at ease. Interviews were scheduled in such a way to minimise the impact on the participants'

workload, for example by checking and avoiding deadline weeks. As the research involved participants who are not native English speakers, I framed the questions in a straightforward way and re-framed the questions if they were misunderstood.

4.6. Chapter conclusion

In summary, multiple methods have been used in this qualitative study in order to allow the researcher to answer the research questions. The multiple methods employed were ego-network mapping, semi-structured interviews and walking interviews with ten international research students. The principle phenomenon of interest was operationalised as *the integration experiences of international students in the UK* and a purposive sample of participants was chosen from those who responded to an open call for volunteers and who fulfilled certain inclusion criteria. Alongside this, interviews have taken place with the local Community Cohesion Manager and the International Student Marketing Manager.

The research is a phenomenological case study. Although no single student can represent the entire international student population, employing a case study design and taking a phenomenological approach has allowed an insight from different standpoints, enabling the researcher to build an understanding of how a sample of international students have experienced integration in the UK. It is suggested that interpretative phenomenological analysis as it has been carried out in this study can add to our understanding of 'being' an international student in the UK by telling individual stories which may serve to highlight more collective experiences.

The chosen approaches and methods have resulted in some rich and illuminating case-study data which will be presented in the following four chapters. Chapter Five will introduce the participants along with their network maps and give an overview of where

they are from, why they chose to move to Hilltown and their initial perceptions of life in the UK. This paves the way for Chapter Six to discuss their observations about living in Britain, Chapter Seven to focus on the participants' interactions and participation in the communities that they are a part of and Chapter Eight to focus on the participants' mobilisation of social capital.

Chapter 5: The participants and their networks.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to inform the reader about the participants. It offers an individual introduction to each of the ten international research students who took part in this study. The chapter is partly descriptive, as I draw out the key characteristics of each participant and give an overview of where they are from, why they chose to move abroad to study, why in particular they chose Hilltown as their destination and their initial perceptions of life in the UK. Whilst the intention is to allow the reader to form their own picture, inevitably this also contains some researcher interpretation and therefore analysis. Along with each overview, I will present the participants' visual ego-network 'maps' which were created in the initial interview and describe how they have built social contacts during their time in the UK. There is some discussion in the conclusion section and this will set the scene for the subsequent three chapters to examine the participants' integration experiences and the interplay between social capital and their integration experiences.

5.1.1. Network maps

To help the reader understand the network maps, the following table describes the different sections and the instructions that were given to the participants when creating their maps:

	Inner circle: Most important	Middle circle: Important	Outer circle: Least important
Pink section	Co-national contacts: Social contacts who are from your country and who you have met at university.		
Green section	International contacts: Social contacts who are not from your country and who are not from the UK and who you have met at university.		
Blue section	UK contacts: Social contacts who are from the UK and who you have met at university.		
Yellow section	Non-institutional contacts: Social contacts who are resident in the UK and who you have met outside the university.		
Orange section	Home country contacts: Social contacts who are resident in your home country who you are in regular contact with whilst you are here.		

Table 2: Network map key

5.2. The participants

This section will introduce the reader to each participant along with their ego-network maps.

5.2.1. Meg

Meg is from Bulgaria. She moved to Hilltown to do her Master's degree for which she gained a distinction and subsequently won a fee-waiver scholarship to do a PhD in Psychology. She is now in the second year. Meg chose Hilltown as her supervisor is a key figure in her specific field of study. Meg is very focussed on her PhD and has undertaken extra research projects, on which she works hard. It is important to Meg to be recognised for her academic and professional capabilities. Meg labels herself as having a *stressful personality* and it is clear that she is very driven to succeed. Because of this she puts a lot of pressure on herself to do well. Meg describes her dedication to the PhD as a 'sacrifice'. Although she is a *social person*, she has actively isolated herself from other people and has not made many efforts to instigate new friendships. Her reasoning is so that they cannot distract her and she can concentrate on her work. She is very driven to complete her PhD, after which she can *start living* again:

I feel that I am putting social life on hold but I feel that once I collect my data I will be social again.... But this is who I am! I have this very negative trait in my character, which is called stress. I stress a lot and until I do all the jobs I just can't have fun and I can't take free time and that's why I said like three years to PhD is totally crossed out of my life! After that I will be living! (Meg)

When she does allow herself time to socialise, it is important for Meg to know the other Bulgarian people in Hilltown and to be known by them. Meg enjoys going for coffee, lunch, dinner and to nightclubs and she goes to the university gym as often as she can which helps her to *de-stress* and *channel the negative side from the PhD*.

I don't want to be distracted. I've been to the PhD room several times and people just talk to each other. They come in because they haven't seen you much they start asking 'what are you doing, what's your project, what are the other projects, how do you find life in England?' and all day just passes. Then at the end of the day I haven't done anything so I say no, I'm staying at home. (Meg)

Before she arrived in the UK, Meg used Facebook and other social media sites as a tool to find co-nationals strategically, using the search function and becoming 'friends' online. This was a convenient way of gathering information about her co-nationals and she used her relationship with them to access information:

I asked other Bulgarians, I literally befriended them on Facebook and wrote to them. Then, of course they are interested in new in-comers so most of them wrote to me but now they know me. Yeah so by the time my course started I knew everything. (Meg)

Meg has a number of 'important' friends who she has placed in the centre circle of her network map. She also has several friends who she met outside of university.

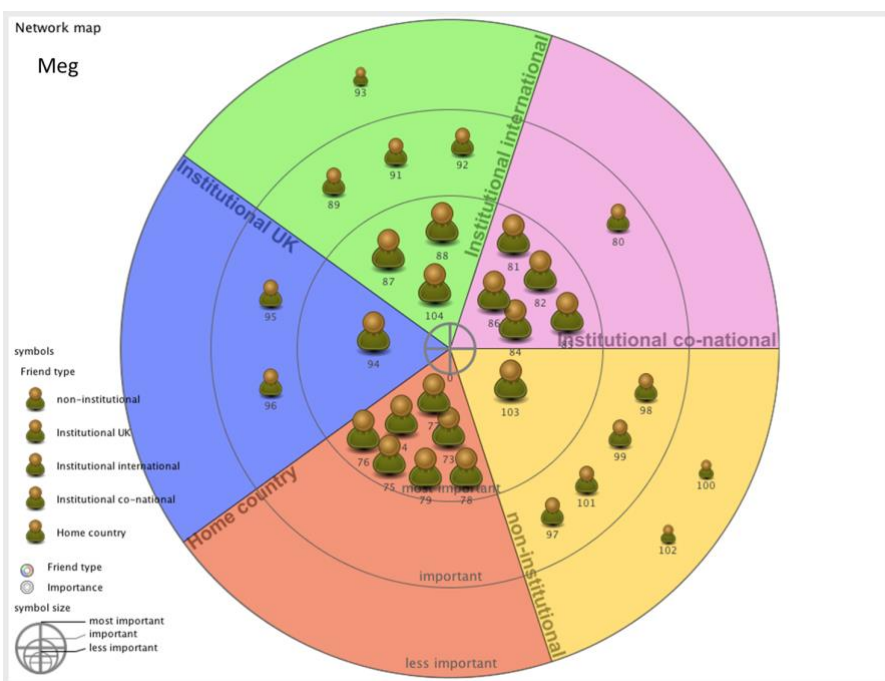


Figure 2: Meg

The contact positioned in the centre yellow section is Meg's housemate Kasia who she met when they moved in together. Kasia is Polish and is a key social contact as she has introduced Meg to all of her non-institutional friends. It is important to note that these friends are themselves what the policy discourse labels 'economic migrants'. They are mainly Polish, they have found work and settled in the UK and are seen as 'host' friendships through Meg's eyes; a common finding from this study that will be critically analysed in the following two chapters. In the pink, green and blue sections Meg names her PhD colleagues. She met these mostly during professional development courses and

although she does not attribute them as ‘best friends’ they are a valuable source of support hence she has placed them in the centre circle.

5.2.2. Ruhksana

Ruhksana is from Pakistan. She moved to Hilltown to do her PhD in Business and interviews take place in Ruhksana’s fourth and final year of her PhD. The first point that Ruhksana made when we met was that she is deeply committed to Islam and therefore her prayers are very important to her. She feels *preoccupied* until she can *find somewhere to pray*. In times of great stress when she arrived, Ruhksana found comfort in the presence of other Pakistani Muslim women, or ‘sisters’. Ruhksana does not socialise outside of the home very often, saving meals out for special occasions. Ruhksana has an *adopted family* in Hilltown, the family of her British Pakistani friend and housemate Salma. She visits Salma’s family in their homes and they speak different community languages together. Ruhksana also has a sense of duty to her family in Pakistan, as it is a part of her culture to be involved closely with the family network. Because of her Whatsapp groups, Ruhksana can maintain her involvement with her friends and family from wherever she is:

They are a Whatsapp group and daily there is a long list of messages and I can’t resist! [laughs] I am the oldest one and they all are like younger siblings, so they always being like naughty kind of stuff and I’m always, like, as being eldest sister ‘don’t do that!... And I need to talk with my siblings, I need to catch up with them every day. Actually I feel incomplete myself, if I miss one single thing, by the evening I become really disturbed. So that’s the kind of emotional attachment you could say? (Ruhksana)

Ruhksana, like the others, sees her PhD as a constant time-consuming job:

Here for me there is time constraints and company constraints, cost constraints... so many constraints! [laughs] Research pressure is quite a lot. At least in the undergraduate or taught programmes, they have term off time. So they can think about other things, but for us, the whole year we can’t even think about anything else. (Ruhksana)

When doing the mapping activity, Ruhksana seems surprised that she has so many social ties, because she *feels alone* in the UK. When she is in Pakistan her network is much busier than the map she has made here. Ruhksana, like Meg, describes how it feels natural to live away from home as her family is spread around in different countries:

Well for me it is something very usual because lots of my family, like I've got big extended families so like in my relations I've got a lot living in different countries. Like my mum's family, most of the siblings have lived always in some other country. (Ruhksana)

Ruhksana's network map shows an even distribution of social contacts across sectors, with the most important being her family ties from her home country.

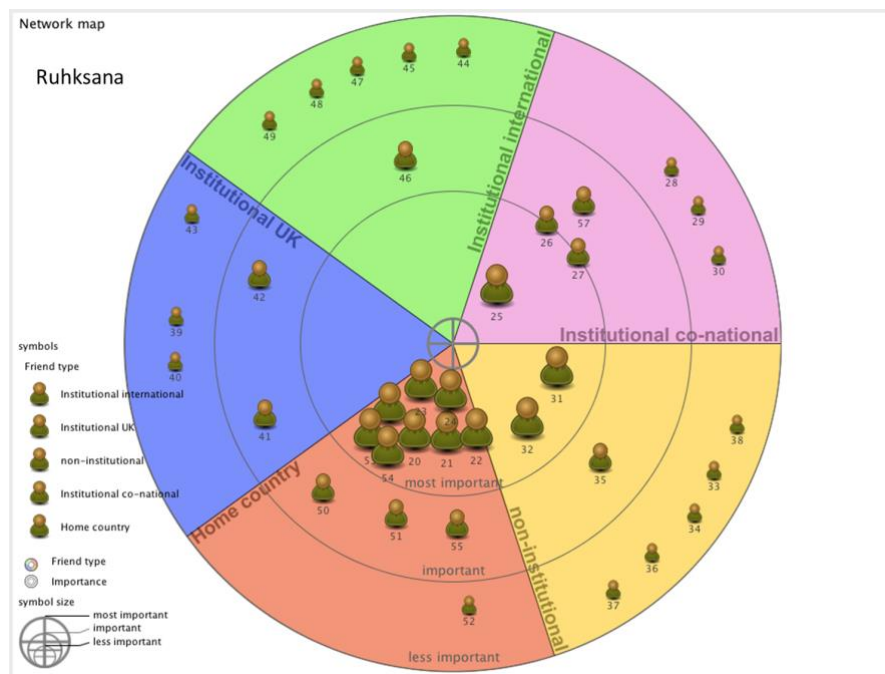


Figure 3: Ruhksana

Ruhksana separates her professional (PhD) life from her personal life. She attends as many professional development sessions as she can and has developed a small network of research colleagues this way. Ruhksana's personal social life is situated outside of the university context, which is her choice. She placed a number of contacts in the yellow section (non-institutional) and these are all British people with Pakistani heritage, including her best friend Salma who she met at work:

It's really interesting that I have a really nice kind of relationship with her. Now we are close friends who share secrets. We tell each other everything and we both are like kind of mums and siblings as well. If she'll not eat I'll pinch her and if I miss my meal she's again after me [laughing] (Ruhksana)

It was essential for Ruhksana to live in a house with people who shared a similar background. She wanted to *feel connected* to something and she wanted an *adopted family* who shared Islamic culture, values, traditional food and to be able to *pray in comfort*.

5.2.3. Robbie

Robbie is from China. He arrived in Britain as a Master’s student of Architecture and has now continued to PhD level. He would like to stay and work in the UK after his PhD and he chose to study at Hilltown because they offered him a tailor-made solution to obtaining his British RIBA architecture qualification, which is recognised world-wide. Robbie shows a fondness for many aspects of the British culture such as sport, art and theatre. He gets his fix of these by visiting London regularly:

I probably have been to London 30 times, and I have been here 4 years. I can go to watch Wimbledon every year. I watch musicals, I watched Phantom three times already, Royal Opera House to watch ballet... of course Royal Albert Museum, watch lots of exhibitions and things to do, go to cinemas and... London never makes you bored. Also London shopping and... China town has lots of restaurants, it’s very good. Also, I haven’t mentioned other people but actually know quite a few other people that live in London. (Robbie)

Robbie is the only participant who is explicit in his desire to stay in Britain after his PhD:

I will say the most what attracts me to stay here is.. this is where I want to get my achievement, where I can find my dream, to be an architect. Because I used to work in China. My senior manager used to talk to me.. he’s a very successful architect in China. But I can tell after 20 years I will be him, but that’s not the life I want to be. It’s like, design, it’s not based on the design, just like doing the job is just the job so I will get bored very soon. But I feel that here I am improving and people respect if you are doing something good, doesn’t matter where you are from. So that’s the right attitude, but in China sometimes it’s like.. if the work gets to be done, but it’s not about how good work you produce, it’s about the relationship, how you dealing with them, how you divide the benefits, it’s out of your job, out of your main design work. (Robbie)

Robbie’s network map shows that he has an even distribution of friends across all categories. Many of his social contacts who are based in London are Chinese international

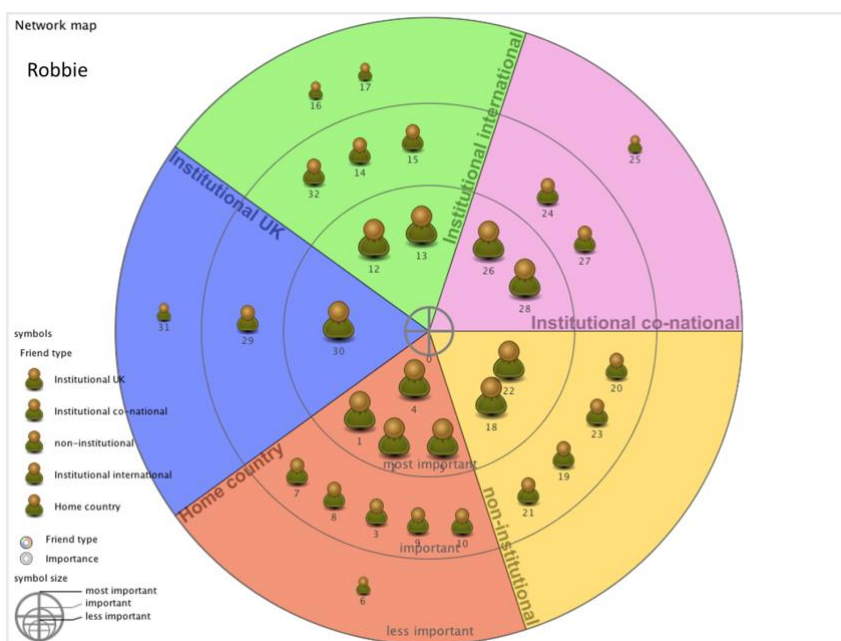


Figure 4: Robbie

students. When asked how he knows so many people in London, Robbie's answer is simple; *Friend expansion. Friend network*. He also spends a lot of time visiting his friends who are scattered around different countries. Robbie stands out as he has a 'best' British friend who he met whilst doing his Master's. They meet often in a nearby city and this has allowed Robbie to meet others from outside of the academic community. Robbie met his other social contacts from university during the professional development sessions organised by the central research department.

5.2.4. Abdo

Abdo is Kurdish, from Iraq. He moved to Hilltown to do a PhD in Business, currently in his fourth and final year. Abdo describes what he loves about the UK by comparing it with his home country:

Everything! In the UK I like everything – the bus, the train, the bank, the systems, the shops, the life, quality of life, everything. I cannot describe for you, everything from single things to big things!
(Abdo)

Abdo could not offer enough praise to the efficiency of the UK systems such as banking.

He compared this with the system of using cash in his country:

We have just cash. If you just, if you want a deal, you have to carry the cash with you. For example, if you want to buy some things like cars, you have to carry cash, like this [demonstrates a big bag]. Like everything in cash. Houses! If you buy a house you have to bring two persons with you! [laughs] In my country it's like this. No card, you have to go back two hundred years ago if you go to my country! (Abdo)

Although he describes these things with much enthusiasm, Abdo struggles to answer questions about British people because he has not found many opportunities to interact with British people in university or in society. There is no doubt that Abdo will return home after his PhD, but he is still unhappy about how few chances he has had to forge connections with British people as he feels that this is a missed opportunity to learn about the British culture and improve his language skills. Abdo describes a desire but real lack of opportunity to meet British people:

I have less opportunity to make friends with English people because the main things you can contact with people is your location of study, or your place of work. When I stay here in the research office I

don't feel like I am in the UK. Because all Arabs, majority of Arabs. You cannot hear English language in our office! You just hear the Arabic language. I don't think this is a good thing. (Abdo)

However, Abdo's network map still shows us that he has a large social group. This is because he shares a busy research office with many other international students who are *ninety per cent Arabic speakers*. Abdo therefore has a large network of Arabic-speaking male friends who are doing their PhDs in the same department. Food is a very important part of Abdo's culture. He travels far and wide when he hears of a good restaurant. He has found a local Kurdish restaurant where he goes regularly:

Yes I go there with my friends to eat in this restaurant, to eat shwarma, and chicken with... fried with machines like this if you know this machine? [indicates a kebab grill] It is Kurdish, it is run by Kurdish people. I like going there because they do shwarma. (Abdo)

Abdo is not married and invites these friends over to his house regularly to share food and *have a nice time*. Abdo also spends a lot of time in Kurdish restaurants and has built up some social ties with restaurant owners, shown in the yellow non-institutional section of the map. Abdo is very sociable. His only complaint about life in the UK is that the shops close early and there is no street life after 5pm. He compares this to the social practices that he has in his country which has a busy street life until as late as midnight. This is a common theme amongst participants and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

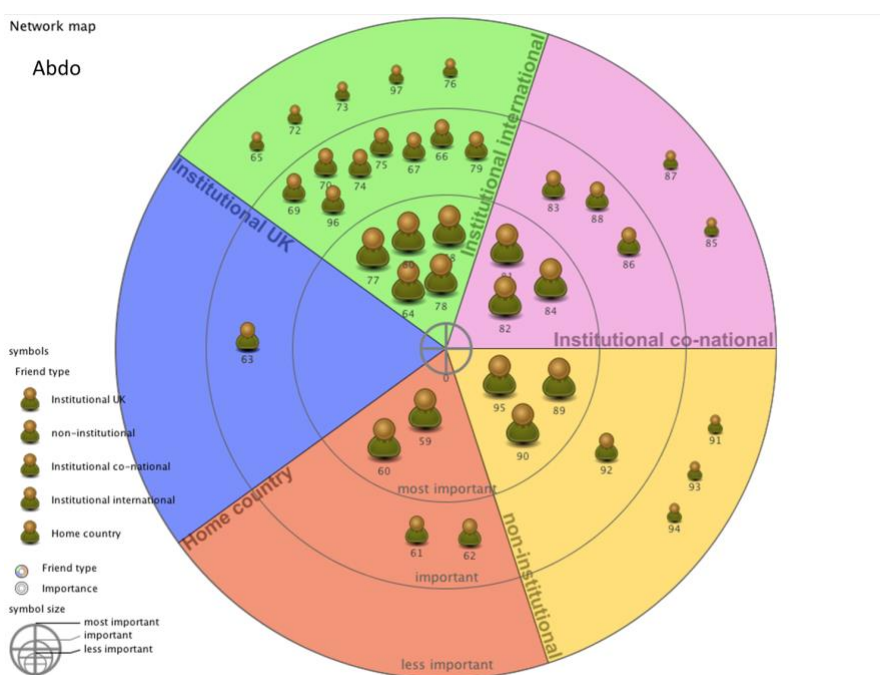


Figure 5: Abdo

5.2.5 Jennifer

Jennifer is from Turkey. She moved to Hilltown to do her PhD in Engineering and is currently in her second year of a four-year stay. Jennifer's main motivation for moving to the UK was for its academic reputation.

I always wanted to be an academic and do my masters and PhD and so on. For us it is really good to say we come to UK university. It is very privilege, it is prestige. And actually to learn more, to be in a real research environment. It is good to know the things and to learn the things better than in Turkey. (Jennifer)

Jennifer talks a lot about the changing political situation in Turkey and how the country is divided into religious and secular people. This has left Jennifer feeling disconnected to Turkey and exploring her options of working in different countries when she completes her PhD. Like many of the participants, being from a 'transnational' background, it is not unusual for her to be around people from various countries. She has worked in multinational companies, she went to an American school from year six to year nine in Turkey and went to a German language school so she describes international education as *always a bit in my life... not really something new*. Jennifer describes the importance of being transnational:

Because in order to develop ourselves, to learn more things, develop our knowledge, it's like a must. Half of my friends in university in my masters went to the US. It is very normal. To stay is abnormal! [laughs] (Jennifer)

Chapter Seven will show that interventions by the university and other organisations are vital in fostering friendships. Yet for older students or those with very few co-national students at Hilltown such as Jennifer, there is still a lack of opportunity to meet people.

Like others, Jennifer turned to social media to get to know some people prior to arriving in the UK:

I met them on Facebook before I came to Hilltown. They are Turkish students. Actually, I just Googled and from LinkedIn information and so on. Then I looked at their Facebook page. You know sometimes you look at photos etcetera. So I knew they are a bit close to my background and let's say lifestyle. (Jennifer)

Jennifer has a love for British literature and culture and enjoys going to the pub. She describes the importance of her own personal development:

I will be in a better place. More stronger. More stronger because I'm a bit not good in decision making, I don't trust myself. So actually, I'm for this time here, also doing PhD to support my weaknesses in my character. I am reading more things, like in the newspaper, not in my research paper, in the newspapers, all the news. Just you know, the things I couldn't find time to do in my home town Istanbul. (Jennifer)

Jennifer feels the need to befriend more Turkish PhD students and to develop more of a support network and better social life to feel *less lonely* and have friends with the *same language and humour*. Unlike some of the other participants, she complains that there is not a big Turkish community in Hilltown as she would feel less lonely if there were more co-nationals. Jennifer's network map is therefore unusual as it shows that she has made very few co-national contacts at university. This is out of lack of opportunity rather than for want of trying. Although Jennifer has named many 'non-institutional' contacts, they are all Turkish international students studying at other universities. She has met British people at different events but has not formed any friendships with them.

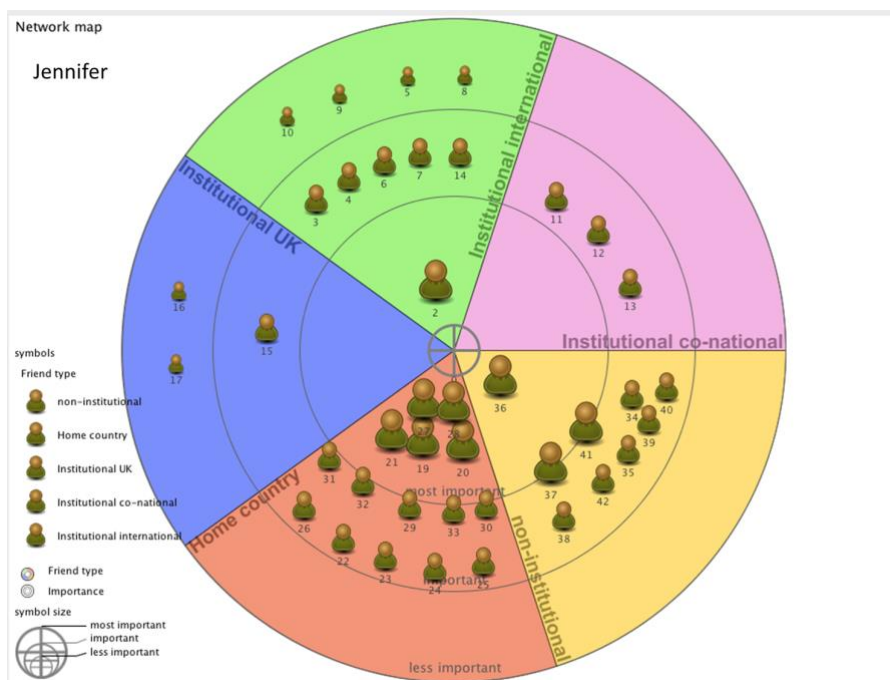


Figure 6: Jennifer

5.2.6. Mani

Mani is from Egypt. He is in his first year of a PhD in Art and Design. He lives with his wife who is on a 'dependant's visa'. They came to Hilltown only a week after marrying. Mani

describes the UK from a consumer's point of view as expensive but with good quality products. He also comments on the lack of air pollution, a good quality of life and being able to walk in the streets with no bother, without *people interfering with your life which is something that we have in our culture*. Mani describes the application process as being very rushed and his visa came through one month before he expected it. As a consequence, he missed his brother's wedding and the birth of his niece and they had no time to plan much. Now Mani's main concern is getting his wife to have an *enjoyable life* in the UK. Mani is missing his support network from back home:

I need support. It's a bad experience to come to study PhD and cope with life in a totally different place. The support is a kind of energy to be able to overcome all of these. Support comes from father and mother and some friends, the friends you grew up with... Okay I can speak on website and make some calls but it is not sufficient enough. Maybe other people are different. Some people just need to play some games like football, they will be okay. Some girls they go shopping and talk to people they will be okay, but sometimes I just need to sit with people and talk about my problems and that will release me of them, and then I will go back again and start work again with a new, fresh eyes. I don't like to complain to somebody who doesn't care for me, I need the closer friends. (Mani)

Mani's network map shows that he has not yet met anybody in the UK outside of the university context. As Mani had not been married very long before travelling to the UK, his main social concern is the integration of his wife rather than his own social needs. He is satisfied that his social needs can be met at university, whilst he is concerned that his wife is spending all day at home alone.

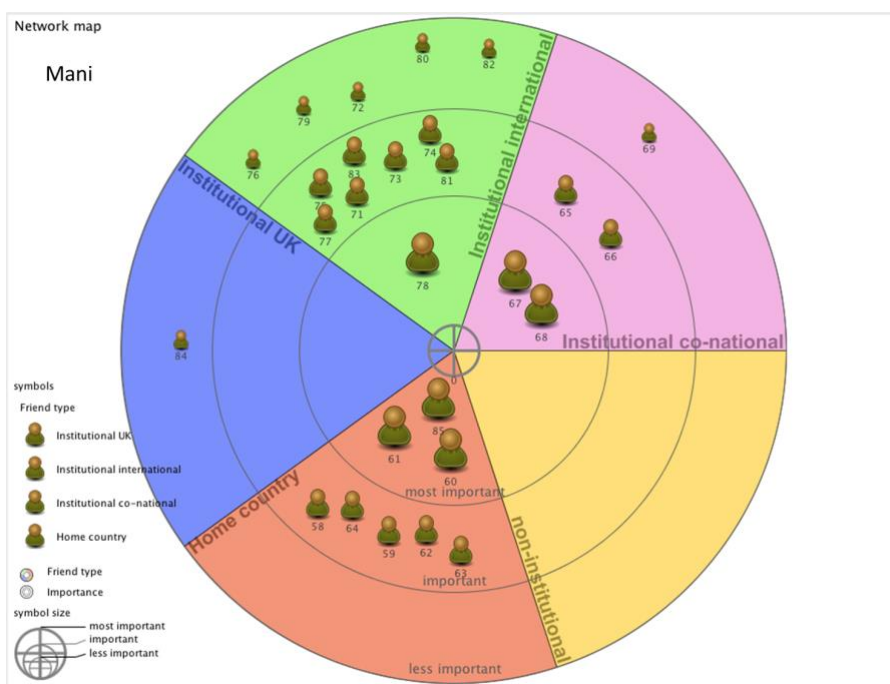


Figure 7: Mani

Mani indicates concern that working on the PhD every day without a break may have a negative effect on his mental wellbeing:

I think I would like to go for a trip for breaking the continue of being dedicated to my study, you know? I need to cut the concern about my PhD just to release my ideas, release my brain to think about something else. Every week or two weeks you have to make a day out. If you don't make it you know, something will happen [indicates head]. (Mani)

5.2.7. Mazee

Mazee is from Nigeria. Like Meg, Mazee moved to Hilltown to do her Master's degree, gained a distinction and received a fee-waiver scholarship to do a PhD in the Biological Sciences. Mazee enjoys spending time alone watching movies at home. She does not like crowds or parties although she does occasionally go to pubs and clubs, because that *makes her friends happy*. Mazee describes that even back home she was almost always away from home, and that this was good preparation for living in the UK. She went to high school in a boarding school and then university in a different state from where her family live. This was different to the rest of her siblings who were educated in the same town. Her reason for moving to the UK was clear:

With all due respect, education in my country is crap. It's theory-based. I did my undergraduate studies in microbiology. Four years in the university of Benin, in four years I looked through a microscope maybe three times? And I touched it once. Yeah... and I say I'm a micro-biologist! (Mazee)

Mazee chose Hilltown in particular because she has an uncle in a nearby city. Mazee thinks the UK is organised and says that this suits her *partial OCD* as she needs to *plan plan plan!* On a negative note, Mazee describes her life as a routine:

...Wake up, go to uni, study, go home, have something to eat, sleep, wake up, go to uni, it's nothing happens in the day. Even when I speak to my family at night they say 'oh what happened today?', I say 'oh the same as yesterday' there's really nothing to say. Some days also with the research is nice and happy and some days I'm like 'oh my goodness why am I doing this?' Because you're doing the same thing over and over again. Then some weekends I just get depressed and wait for Monday to come [laughs]. It's hard to go out when you know you're coming back to meet the same problem. (Mazee)

For some, it seems that simply sharing a nationality is enough to create friendships.

Mazee describes being introduced to a newly arrived Nigerian student through a mutual friend, who phoned and asked her to meet the newcomer *because he just doesn't have*

any friends. Consequently, he is now part of Mazee's social circle. Mazee's network map shows that she has a lot of Nigerian friends. She also has a Nigerian boyfriend who she met at Hilltown. Not all participants are interested in meeting local people, as Mazee demonstrates:

I wasn't keen. I knew that I was going to meet people obviously but I didn't think it was like part of the priority I have to make British friends. I think that is something that is just going to happen, there is no need to force it yourself. So I have a few, it's fine now. You don't need to make friends, do you? (Mazee)

Here, Mazee portrays the usefulness of making Nigerian friends at first, yet the following account suggests that once they had helped her through the adjustment phase she no longer felt the need to keep in touch with most of her co-national contacts:

Yeah it was nice, cos it reduces the boredom and the loneliness for the first few months so at least I had that, people who could relate to what I was going through, being homesick and that but now it's like, I feel over it. We see each other for example 'We are in the UK, I know you, I know your culture, I want to learn other things now!' [laughs] (Mazee)

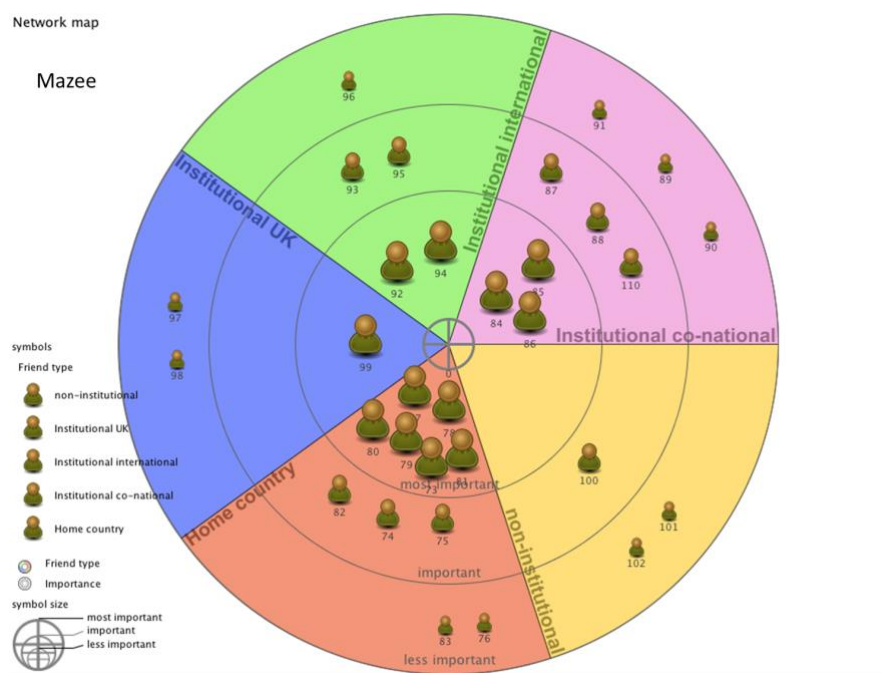


Figure 8: Mazee

5.2.8. Zinnia

Zinnia is from Myanmar. She first came to Hilltown to complete the final year of her Business Bachelor's degree, gained a first class degree and then continued to do a Master's by research because she was awarded a fee waiver. Zinnia has made a lot of

effort to take part in British life. She enjoys going to the same café every week for a *British breakfast* where they remember her regular order of *no sausage, extra mushroom*. She has also been on some coach holidays with a British tour company. Zinnia is not interested in nightclubs or popular culture, but does enjoy meeting people on trips and organised events.

Zinnia's decision to move abroad to study was influenced by her classmates, rather than her family as she *was fortunate enough* to get into the top class at school. There, she met friends who were not keen on joining a local university, preferring to go and study abroad.

Zinnia explains why she chose to study in the UK in particular:

Because we are colonised by the British, then in that period there were so many scholars they came to study in the UK then also became British. Also the Burma leader Aung San Suu Kyi she got degree from Oxford, so people think like 'Oh... all the educated people are from the UK' they just have that image. (Zinnia)

Zinnia, like others, describes the convenience of life in the UK:

I think like, it's about the convenience, because here the infrastructure like when you are making a booking for travel or when you want to transfer money. In Myanmar you need to go in the bank, it takes one day to transfer the money but here it's very convenient and more advanced. Like the internet connection is still like very slow so, here everything you can do at home, like doing the stuff download a book, use Amazon, just pick up your order from the store. Everything is convenient here. (Zinnia)

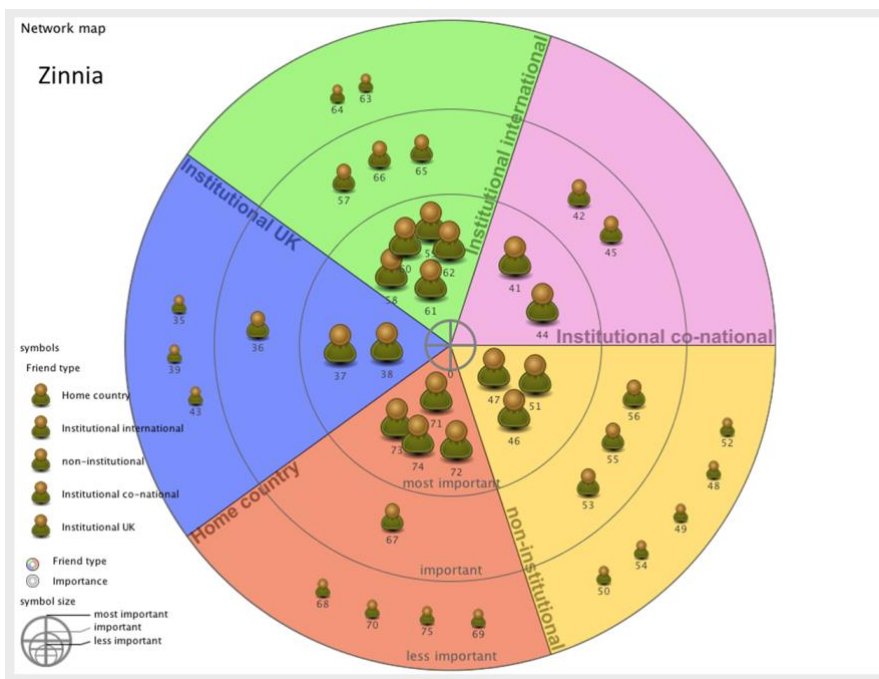


Figure 9: Zinnia

Zinnia has a sizeable social network. Although sharing a nationality does not necessarily mean that Zinnia seeks to form friendships with co-nationals, she believes the cultural familiarity even between people with different personality types means that they can attend the same events and create a critical mass of co-nationals. Zinnia elucidates:

Myanmar students are a very small community so even those you don't know, and you don't purposely want to make relationships, you still share the basic culture so you can share the same events. So you want to join this even though you don't know each other very well. (Zinnia)

Zinnia describes her own personal development, that living in the UK has accelerated this by helping her to become independent more quickly than if she had remained in her own country to study. Zinnia's network map shows an even distribution of social contacts across sectors. Like others though, her research takes priority over her social life:

I feel like being a research student is a big, it's a long-winded process. Like for example last year when you finish an assignment, one assignment is done so you can relax. But as a research student... if you finish your literature review you still need to go and work on something.. like is never ending! (Zinnia)

Although she has made some friends from the UK, Zinnia feels that there is a separation between professional life and social life.

5.2.9. Leo

Leo is from China. He moved to Hilltown to do his PhD in Engineering. Leo explains that, now, studying abroad is *easy if you have money or if you study really well you can get a scholarship*. He chose the UK specifically because his supervisor, who is also Chinese but now a UK resident, is an expert in his particular field. Leo often compares the UK with China. Like Mani, he mentions that the environment is better than his country. Not only the air, but the water is cleaner. Another thing he observes is that the people are friendly, they say thank you and hello and open the door for him, whereas he thinks that China has a much quicker pace of life and people do not necessarily have the time to say hello. He suggests that life is less stressful in the UK compared with China, which has *positive and negative sides*:

I just think living here is quite simple. You can do what you want. There is no other things to worry you. But in China there seems to be you are busy every day about a lot of things. A lot of various things to make you feel stressed. Maybe it is too simple living here and you cannot feel change, you know? You can see your future maybe five years later will stay the same. There is no change. But in China, even I leave just for one year, when you go back you can see the change in a lot of things, like the restaurants, all the service, it's quite different. (Leo)

Leo admits that he was quite shocked when he first arrived in the UK as he noticed many women wearing hijabs and people practising their religion openly in the research office. He suggests that his surprise at this was because he thought that the UK was *all white people, it's not US like with black people or different colours*. From his experience so far in Hilltown, Leo considers the UK to be *half Muslim* and reflects that this may be because his previous experience of the UK is *just from TV shows*.

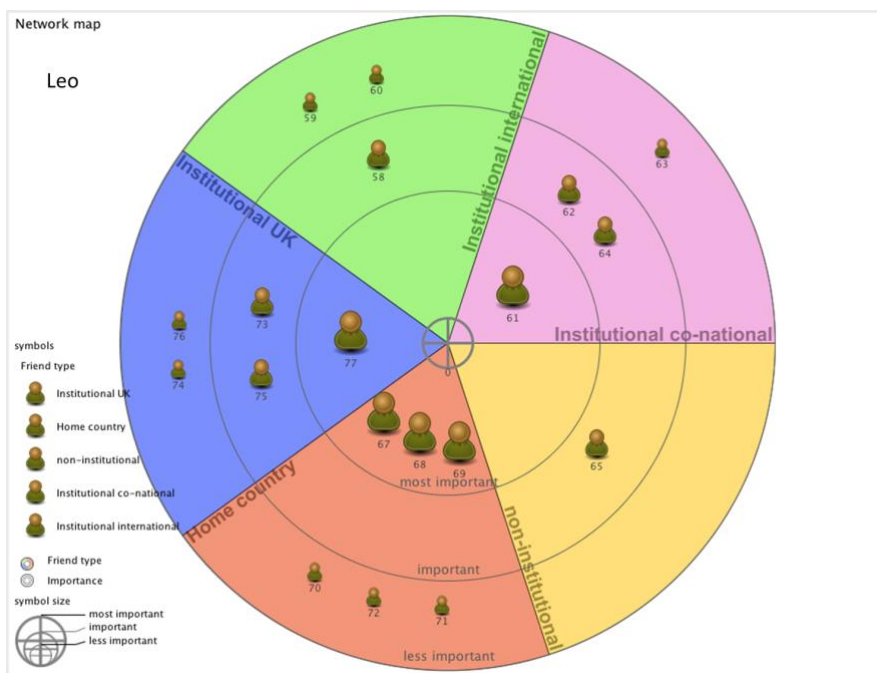


Figure 10: Leo

For Leo, it isn't enough to just meet other British people, they need to have shared interests. He is focussed on his research so wants to be able to talk about it with any friends that he meets. Leo describes his research as being quite isolating because he is the only researcher in his field:

Because maybe my topic is not so closely relevant to the interest of the group. So it's kind of isolating. There are also some limitations of myself, maybe to work things out just by myself, not tell them what you have done or... because if you don't tell them they won't ask you. So I think I should create some chance to communicate with them. Not just wait for them to communicate to me. In a positive way you have more research freedom, but in other perspective you have to... you have to

learn by yourself, almost everything. You have to create the chance to get into contact with some resources or people outside. Yeah so I think it's a little difficult for me at first but then try hard to get used to it. (Leo)

Leo's network map is quite sparsely populated, due in part to his isolated research experience but also because as an only child he does not have a large family network. His friends from China have noticed a change in him, he thinks due to living alone and having to *become independent and more mature quite quickly*. He has joined a badminton club at the university gym and has met some friends there.

5.2.10. Logan

Logan is from India. He moved to Hilltown to do his PhD in Engineering. He chose the UK for practical reasons as you can *complete a PhD in three years, which is quicker than in the USA*. Logan describes the different options available to him and his peer group:

There are a few people who always wanted to stay in India, like even though they had opportunities, they never wanted to leave their parents or, like they have their own constraints, own choices... And then there are a few friends who moved abroad and the number of people who moved out is high. If I talk about my batch, the people who I did engineering with, almost 70-80% of the people are currently not in India... It's a trend, but it's more about money. You can make more money outside India... it's easier if you prove yourself outside and then come back to India, you can then get a better position in India. Plus you have many other options outside that are not available yet in India. (Logan)

Although this was a pragmatic choice, Logan acknowledges the *benefit of seeing the world* and suggests that *coming back is never the same as if you had never left in the first place*.

Although Logan suggests that his experience will allow him to see things with a *different vision, with different eyes, under a different light*, he also speaks of a routine existence in which not much happens:

I watch something. Netflix or something or BBC. I usually come here late morning around ten and stay til eight o'clock, seven or eight. And then I'll go to the gym til nine thirty and then move back to my room. I'm pretty much tired so I'll cook something and then I'll sleep. This is the process. I'm usually not very productive early. I become productive and find I am more effective with less people around me. (Logan)

Logan enjoys solitude and as such does not have a large social group to speak of, by choice. Logan's closest friends also live in different countries around the world. Like others, Logan describes the ease or the normality of being transnational as he has worked

for various multi-national companies in India, France, the USA and East Asia. This has helped him to *see the culture of different things*. He also describes this as a cycle:

What happens is that young people join, for example, Intel and they move to the States. And people in the States, they have been working there for five, ten years, then they get married and then they move back to India. So, this is the way it works, so you can work for five, six years abroad and then you can cash in on that experience happily in India. It makes economic sense. (Logan)

Logan is the only participant who has no social contacts in the inner circle, although it is not easy to pinpoint why this may be. He does not seem particularly disturbed by this and does not seem to want to make more friends. He certainly does not describe the need to make many strategic social contacts whilst he is in the UK:

I still don't have a very wide network because if I wanted to do that, India would have been a lot better place to establish a network from Indians who are in the UK doing some work. Building a network wasn't a very high priority for me. Eventually you will meet people who will be useful to you or you will be useful to them in some way or the other. But it's not something which I was, like had it in my head. (Logan)

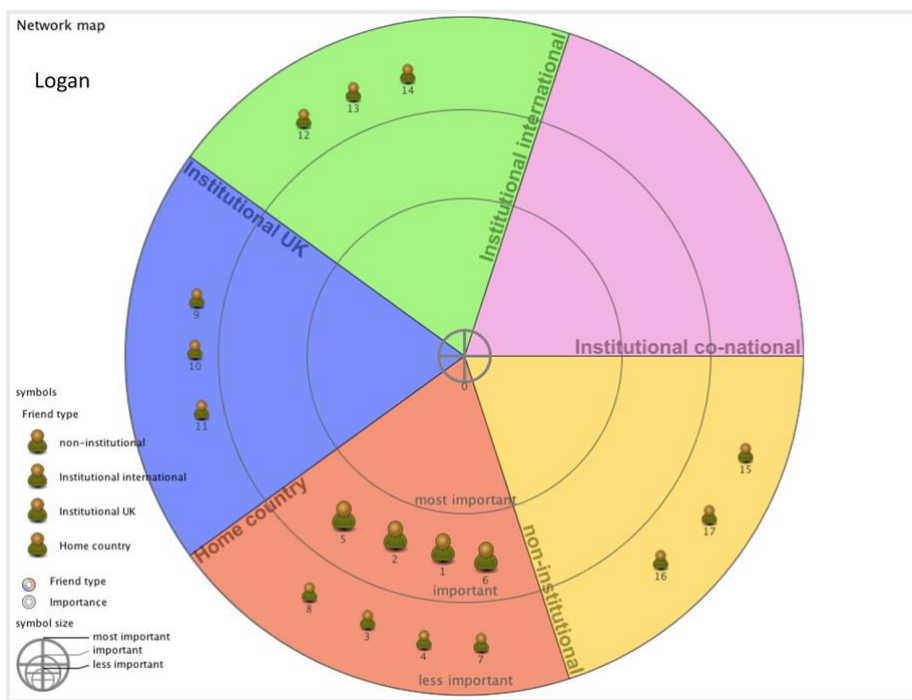


Figure 11: Logan

5.3. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has introduced the ten participants and given an insight into their social worlds by describing the basic nature of their interactions and visualising their ego-network maps. Of note, the two participants with the same nationality, Robbie and Leo, have markedly different social networks and experiences which goes some way in

demonstrating the importance of avoiding methodological nationalism, as discussed in Chapter Four (Modood, 1998; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). Still, as in any qualitative study, the participants' individual stories reveal unique aspects of their lives whilst some common themes were shared across all ten participants.

All participants describe their research as a never-ending task which has a considerable effect on their integration experiences as it inhibits the time the participants have to engage in wider society. For all of the participants, there is a solid focus on their research which is very much seen as a full time job that takes precedence over their non-academic social activities. Even if they are physically away from the research environment, the perception of the research degree as a never-ending process limits the amount of socialising they do because they carry a mental burden and find it difficult to 'switch off'. There are also common reports that their daily routine is not only very busy but also very repetitive. Yet whilst there is a common feeling that they have little free time, they have all made social connections through their research and there is a shared notion amongst the participants that they do need to make some effort to engage in social activities to break their routine and try to integrate. In a way, it motivates them as they all describe their efforts to metaphorically 'break free' from the binds of their studies.

For most, their supervisors were the main pull when choosing a study location and they have all developed a network of research colleagues, named as social contacts on their network maps, who they have met during professional development activities on campus. Consequently, whether they have higher or lower numbers of contacts is largely influenced by the research structure that they belong to. In addition, Meg, Mazee, Zinnia and Robbie began their studies in the UK at undergraduate or taught master's level, which partly explains why their network maps are busier than those who entered straight into their PhD.

In terms of social capital, the inner circle in the participants' network maps can be seen as 'bonding capital' (Putnam, 2000) or 'strong ties' (Lin, 2001). These social contacts are the most important in the participants' lives and include their family and close friends. Arguably these relationships are thought to 'reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups' (Field, 2001, p.65). Whilst this may be the case for Leo, Jennifer and Ruhksana, all three of whom have placed exclusively co-nationals in this group, there are more nuanced examples for the other participants. Abdo and Mani for example seem to find easy friendships with other males from other Arabic-speaking countries, whilst Zinnia, Mazee, Robbie and Meg all describe a heterogeneous mix of social contacts in this inner circle. The middle circle can be seen as 'bridging' social capital and comprises of those social contacts who are not particularly close but who they have met more than once and would approach them for information or advice, such as students they have met during professional development courses yet who may work in a different department from their own. These inner and middle circles would be classified by Lin (2001) as strong and weak ties respectively. Chapter Eight will discuss these relationships in the context of the participants' integration experiences and how they allow participants to 'get by' or 'get ahead' (Putnam, 2000). As previously mentioned, Woolcock (2001) added a third dimension of 'linking' social capital. This can be seen in those contacts named in the outer circle of the network maps, who might allow participants to access resources or information to which their other contacts may not have access.

The convenience of life in the UK became a common theme as every participant independently agreed with UK life being associated with the notion of convenience. They all comment on the systems and structures as being very efficient and making life easier by comparing them with the systems in their home country. Banks, transport and ease of communication systems were recurring factors in their accounts. Some have no trains in

their home country and it is a real novelty in Hilltown to be able to get to neighbouring cities and towns in under half an hour. Some comment on the reliability as well as the comfort and non-crowded nature of public transport, whilst others observe the ease and efficiency of communication systems such as the internet as a tool to use online banking, book travel tickets and order things from the *Amazon* website. This also flags up the way in which all participants refer to their own cultural background to discuss their experiences.

It was striking to hear about the normality of 'transnationalism' (Vertovec, 2009) for all participants. As international mobility has become a common experience in today's globalised world, international students are one particular group of people whose lives span two or more nation-state boundaries. The international student participants in this study have chosen to adopt a transnational life primarily in order to increase their career opportunities, either by giving them an advantage in the search for employment when they return home or in some cases by getting work in the UK or other countries upon graduation. The fact that they all have some previous experience of working in different countries for international companies means that they all describe it as easy and completely natural for them to study and work overseas, thus the participants can be described as 'natural transnationals' which of course has implications for their integration experience as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Finally, although their prior experience has undoubtedly equipped them with certain skills to navigate diverse social situations, there is another obvious structural factor that has an influence on integration, evident in the participants' accounts. It was mentioned in the methodology discussion in Chapter Three that when planning this study the yellow section was included for their non-institutional friends. I maintain that this is qualitative data but the numbers are interesting nonetheless as 55 people have been named in this group overall,

the vast majority being international students who are studying in other UK universities. Of the non-students in the yellow section, most share either an ethnic background with the participant who named them or are migrants themselves. This shows the diversity of Hilltown and raises important issues not only about the meaning of integration but also about how experiences of cohesion, integration and multiculturalism are subjectively and locally situated. Structural opportunities and barriers such as these are indicated often in the participants' accounts and thus will be discussed further in Chapters Six to Eight.

In summary, this chapter has introduced the ten participants and identified a number of themes, some shared, some significantly different. For all participants, the PhD is their main focus and limits the time they have to socialise or meet people. However, there is also a longing to break free from the PhD and daily routine and all participants have met other international students and some settled migrants, which raises questions about how we conceptualise the 'host' community in research involving international students. As 'natural transnationals', the participants seem to be at ease in the UK. The convenience of British life is compared to their native culture, often to its detriment. There is a natural propensity to compare and contrast 'life in the UK' with 'life back home', which they do with great ease. Not only does this show that they have already given this much reflective thought, but it also begins to reveal how they might conceptualise the idea of 'belonging' in the UK. Chapter Six will now focus on the participants' experiences in relation to the discourses of integration. It will critically evaluate the participants' accounts in the context of 'Britishness' and 'Shared sense of belonging' as these two themes are consistently encouraged in the policy discourse of integration (Cameron, 2011; Casey, 2016). The way the participants observe 'Britishness' both in terms of their pre-arrival expectations and their actual experiences is very interesting and flags up important considerations for micro-level integration.

Chapter 6: Experiences of Britain, Britishness and belonging

6.1. Introduction

Britain is, as discussed in earlier chapters, a superdiverse nation with millions of its inhabitants having ancestral links to countries from its colonial past and beyond.

Nonetheless, a consistent theme within the previous and current integration discourses is that all members of society ought to have such things as shared values (Blair, 2000; Cameron, 2011), a shared identity (Kymlicka, 1995), common institutions (Gray, 2000), a common culture (Parekh, 2006), and a shared sense of belonging (Cantle, 2001, 2008; APPG, 2017). In particular, the 'Discourse of Britishness' is the subject of much critique due to its suggested assimilationist undertones (Miah, 2015). Indeed, that there has been no public agreement about what constitutes 'Britishness' (Farrell, 2016) is an incredible flaw given that Britishness surely means different things to different British people as well as post-immigration minorities (Parekh, 2006).

The notion of 'Britishness' is also controversial because The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a nation-state formed from the countries of England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland and each of these arguably has its own national identity. This led Parekh to remark 'It is entirely plain that the word 'British' on its own will never do' (CFMEB, 2000, p.38). Further to this, Kymlicka (1995) argues that, in nation states, the ideal of 'shared values' is an inadequate basis upon which we can construct the sense of belonging that is assumed in policy discourses of nationhood, such as the discourse of Britishness. Kymlicka's work is largely based in the Canadian context, where he maintains that one cannot seek to build social harmony around shared beliefs. He suggests that, for example, people's ideas of what is 'good' are not necessarily shared between all citizens of a nation-state and concludes that shared values are not as important as a shared identity (Kymlicka, 1995).

Yet identity itself is a layered concept (Hall, 1996). It can be both individual and group-based and people may develop fluid identities that are not akin to nation-state identity (Favell, 2001; Cattle, 2008). Values too are potentially becoming more and more subjective and changeable. They change over time, meaning that British values are essentially always going to be a 'work in progress' (Shariatmadari, 2016). National identity, on a subjective level, is thought to help us define who we are. It allows us to view ourselves as a part of the wider environment in which we 'belong' and within the context of how we relate to those around us (Henderson and McEwan, 2005). Where that sense of belonging comes from is entirely subjective. Whether an individual was born in, or migrated to, the nation in question, we are all entitled to feel a sense of belonging however we do so. At the macro level, national identity is a political concept. In the British context it has been developed in an attempt to connect citizens to a sense of belonging to Britain as a nation and promote the government's vision of all sharing five fundamental British values; democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs (DfE, 2014).

As well as promoting shared British values, the policy discourse focuses on a shared sense of belonging as an enabling factor of integration. Although a shared sense of belonging is promoted by those in government, no report has gone so far as to define what this actually means and 'belonging' is 'curiously under-theorised' in the academic sphere (May, 2013, p.6). May describes 'belonging' as

The process of creating a sense of identification with, or connection to, cultures, people, places and material objects... Belonging can be characterised as feeling at ease with one's self and one's social, cultural, relational and material contexts. (May, 2013, p.4)

For May, belonging is found in relation to culture, people, places and objects. Where we feel we belong and who we feel we belong with has an influence on our sense of self. Yet in the integration discourse, belonging is seen less as an individual 'feeling' and more of a

requirement that involves a collective attachment to pre-defined notions of Britain and of Britishness.

The discourses of Britishness, of commonality and sharing, and the wider debates surrounding integration make it problematic to negotiate a place for international students, indeed any newly-arrived migrant, within the integration policy framework. This chapter will analyse the participants' observations about 'British society' and their views of who they see as 'British people' in the absence of their meaningful friendships, in order to decipher what they might see as Britishness, British values and British ways of being and doing. It will then discuss these insights in relation to their own values, and their own ways of being and doing, which are shown as an element of their identity. The chapter will also present the participants' sense of belonging as a subjective concept that can be unravelled by analysis at the individual level. Not only do their own subjective values, individual sense of belonging and ways of being and doing come through in their accounts, but also there is a natural tendency amongst participants to compare and contrast the ways of being and doing that they associate with their home country with those that they find in Britain. This allows a critical examination of how their individual perceptions and experiences can be related to the discourses of integration in terms of its focus on Britishness, sharing and belonging.

6.2. Ways of being and doing: Comparing and sharing

As mentioned earlier, the localised approach to integration comes under the 'community cohesion' remit. The Community Cohesion Manager for Hilltown and its surrounding area was selected as a key informant in the present study in order to decipher the local policy context, and to allow the researcher to relate the participants' stories to the local approaches towards integration. The Community Cohesion Manager leads a programme

of community cohesion activities and projects in Hilltown, around what his team call 'core values' rather than 'British values' as favoured in the policy discourse. He explained, *So this thing about British values, I have a person who looked into these and said these are Islamic values as well, so we call them core values.* This in itself raises concern because key governmental advisors such as Casey (2016) call for the promotion of British values in opposition to the 'regressive attitudes' (p.71) that she found in a small number of Muslim respondents. The core values that the Community Cohesion Manager indicates clearly use the language of community cohesion (Cantle, 2001) and include such things as: shared aspirations, focussing on commonalities, active participation in society, equality of access and opportunity in terms of employment, housing and healthcare, a sense of shared belonging, local identity and collective pride and a strong sense of personal and social responsibility.

In the present study the participants stories reveal that their values and their ways of being and doing, which some but not all regard as being shaped by the society where they are from, are a part of their identity and have a demonstrable effect on their integration experiences. There is much evidence of cultural comparison in their accounts. For example, in Leo's description of how people are socially *just different* in China, he shows surprise at the willingness of people in Hilltown to help him:

I don't know maybe it's just, I mean the social environment is just different. It's quite different. In China, if you ask somebody to help you to do something they will be reluctant to do that. You have to contact your friends, to contact them and use the relationship to solve some problem, or use some money to give them to make the process more quicker! (Leo)

This study does not subscribe to a positivist understanding of culture as 'fixed'. However, if we take Leo's case as an example he attributes an act such as 'helping an outsider' to being more of a British than a Chinese trait. Whilst the intention here is not to reduce 'being Chinese' into a single essentialist idea, this excerpt is an example of the way in which the participants are prone to observe Britain and Britishness in a comparative way,

rather than in a shared way. The same can be said for those people to whom the

Community Cohesion Manager refers to in the following excerpt:

One of the things we find is that you've got to build trust between people, it's all about relationships, because we can have a conversation about why people wear certain clothes, why people have certain cultural practices, but if you don't know them then it makes it more awkward to ask those questions. But also the potential is that by asking those questions, you create more barriers, whereas if you get on and know each other then it's much better. (Community Cohesion Manager)

The standpoint of the Community Cohesion Manager is clear. We all make value judgements about the 'Other', comparing them to what we find familiar, but only by getting to know them can we understand our differences, hence the importance of community cohesion projects to foster the sharing that is promoted in the policy discourse of integration (Cantle, 2001; 2008; 2012; Casey, 2016; MHCLG, 2018). A further example of comparing can be found when Ruhksana compares the European family system with the family system in Pakistan. She speaks about her *inherent obligations*, that she has to involve herself closely with her family:

If you know about the Pakistani culture, that comes with some inherent kind of obligations and a system that you need to follow so that becomes an extra kind of job. So it's always like you are going in three different ways. You know the European family system, I don't know whether I'm right or wrong, it seems quite loose to me, people are living individually, independently, but we are always with family... The one thing is being a Muslim, it's part of our social responsibility to remain attached with the society and with the persons around. It's our obligation to know about the others living around, if they are doing well or not. (Ruhksana)

Ruhksana speaks here about her inherent obligations. She suggests that she was born into a society that requires social responsibility. She speaks of *being a Muslim* as having the social obligations that she speculates are missing from British family life. Whilst these are innocent generalisations on Ruhksana's part, based on her subjective experiences of her own culture and Britain, there is some evidence to confirm a 'modernisation shift'. Pre-industrial society is said to have discouraged social mobility whilst emphasizing values such as tradition, hereditary status and shared obligations, supported by religious norms (Inglehart et al., 1998). Modern societies such as Britain are though to encourage the opposite; economic success, individualism and technological innovation alongside increasingly secular and adaptable social norms, which to an extent are reflected in Ruhksana's observations.

It is important to question whether Ruhksana's family obligations have anything to do with being Muslim per se, rather than being from a traditional society in which *religion is a big part of the culture* as understood by Mani in the context of Egypt. Furthermore, many nuanced cultural practices are family-based, passed on from one generation to the next, a point which is especially valid when we consider the stories of Jennifer, Abdo and Maze. They are all Muslim, yet do not mention any sort of obligation to their family. Quite the reverse in fact can be said for Maze:

When I was home I was almost always away from home. Because I was the oldest so I did my high school in a boarding school and then my university was in a different state from where I live, so out of all my siblings I am really the one who is used to not being around. (Maze)

Jennifer describes her own family as *a bit secular* and shows an awareness of how her cultural background affects her experiences in Britain. She explains that, growing up in Turkey, she was *very influenced by the West* and gives examples of *cooking roast turkey* at Christmas time, adoring Shakespeare and listening to punk music when she was in high school.

Influences such as these are reflected in the thinking of Hall (1996), who recognised that identity is 'strategic and positional' and 'constantly in the process of change and transformation' especially in the course of migration. He argues that identities are constructed through difference. They are not 'who we are' or 'where we came from' so much as 'what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.' (Hall, 1996, p.6). More recently, Tran and Gomes (2017) have found this to be the case with international students because they identify with being cosmopolitan and international. As a mobile and heterogeneous group, the identity of the participants in the present study is multifaceted and changing. As 'natural transnationals' many are influenced by the international nature of the people they meet and the ideas that they come across. For example, Britain is highly-regarded by Jennifer for its liberal values and she describes the difficulty of being from a family that is *a bit*

secular now that Turkey has a religious president. She portrays this as a real barrier to her not wanting to return and work in the area of her research because she feels that the government controls that area and would want to employ like-minded (religious) people:

Actually things are changing, even in these past few months. I always wanted to return back. But another thing is that we don't like our president. He polarised the country into two; Secular people and religious people. So... when we talk about infrastructure projects, these projects are managed by the government. So if they are religious they want religious people. It is hard, I don't want to work with these people. And the Turkish people are changing. The identity of the people has changed. People become more – you know putting headscarves on, in the past it didn't see that much. I was born in Izmir city and we are a bit secular, so my parents and grandparents are drinking alcohol, and they are not raising me like 'Oh Jennifer, you have to wear headscarf, don't drink alcohol...' we are not raised like that. (Jennifer)

Jennifer is explicit in her respect for the democracy that she sees in the UK and feels despondent that Turkey is not like this. She equates a change from secular to religious values with a change in identity. She gives an example of watching *BBC Parliament* on television when people were asking straightforward questions to the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Jennifer despairs that *in Turkey there is no such thing* and feels that she has learnt *how things should be* in the political sense. She concludes that her sojourn in Britain has encouraged her to change:

Turkey is not like a home now. I am more maybe individualistic, you know? Maybe more individualistic. I am looking at myself, how I am changing. I am also criticising Turkish people in Turkey.. Like now so much I don't want to talk to 50% of Turkish people now minimum! No I don't... They're becoming more religious, I don't understand it. How we are changing in a bad manner. So I'm feeling more individual. I'm more looking at my own development. How my character is changing, how the things are influencing, how I am combining my past and my future, how should I be. (Jennifer)

International students' identities therefore may not be based exclusively around where they were born, although that is a part of it, but are also built from the wider legacy of their experiences as internationally mobile people. In Jennifer's case, she decides she cannot relate to half of the people from her country and therefore she no longer feels that she belongs there. In contrast with the above accounts from Leo and Ruhksana, Jennifer now relates much more to the British ways of being and doing. In this case the democracy she sees in Britain makes more sense to her than the lack of democracy she fears will transpire in Turkey. She feels a sense of shared values, although this is on her terms. The discourses of integration support a tolerance of all people regardless of faith, yet Jennifer

is to some extent showing an intolerance of religious practices as she does not wish to associate with overtly religious people.

As mentioned earlier, the doctoral student experience itself has been known to create a shift in perspective as the researcher's identity changes whilst they create new knowledge. This experience has been likened to 'liminality' (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969) and this is enhanced for international students as they may simultaneously experience culture shock along with doctoral study (Keefer, 2015, p.18). Research also shows that the doctoral student experience is affected by the research structure they are involved in (Delamont, Atkinson and Parry, 2000; Chiang, 2003; Janta, Lugosi and Brown, 2014). For example, Chiang (2003) identifies two structures as a 'Teamwork' structure in the natural sciences and an 'Individualist' structure in the social sciences. The individualist structure was reported by Chiang's participants as an 'isolated, separated and lonely process' (p.24), exacerbated by a sense of hierarchy in the department of Education where the study was situated. This is shown to an extent in Zinnia's account as she illustrates a two-tier hierarchy in which UK students are 'above' her:

In the research people are very mature and so they kind of.. their tone, when you talk, when you have a question they will give you a very patient answer. But it's not kind of like a friend, it's kind of like the mentor. It's not the same level, so you can be friend with them but not, you know kind of like senior and junior [gestures with hands, two levels, laughing]. (Zinnia)

Whilst none of the participants would disagree with the 'British' values promoted in the discourse, these are seen as *obvious* and *not only British* (Logan). The participants here tend to reflect more on the nuanced ways of being and doing that they perceive as different between their own countries and Britain. These observations perhaps contribute to making them feel as though they are on the outside, looking at Britain from a stance of inherent difference. It is unsurprising then that the literature shows many international students tend to seek to connect with other co-nationals at first as this may fulfil their need to find a sense of cultural familiarity (Bochner et al. 1977; Maundeni, 2001). That said, as

we can see from the network maps in Chapter Five, the social groups of the participants in the present study extend mostly to other international students, not only co-nationals, that they have met at Hilltown. Whilst still largely bonding social capital, this goes some way in demonstrating the formation of an 'international student' identity and a sense of belonging to an international student community. Furthermore, there is evidence of them wishing to embrace their differences as a way to integrate, by extending their social groups to include British people. As they seek personal development through their sojourn, all express a wish to meet 'local' people for strategic reasons that will be discussed in the following section.

6.3. Learning from the locals... But who are the locals?

In an effort to learn more about Britain, most participants speak of *choosing* their friends, giving practical reasons for wanting to form friendships with British people such as for cultural insight, to learn 'how to act' and to improve their language, rather than to develop meaningful friendships. Robbie speaks strategically. As he wants to live in Britain, he wants to be more integrated, therefore he wants to learn from the British people about *the important things* such as *What is acceptable in your culture? What is not acceptable? What is polite?* Abdo also has a genuine desire to speak to more English people in order to *get more information from this country*:

You have to interact with the British people so they tell you more information. Not just language, but culture as you know, the way how they live, what is it about their life, because this country, it has a lot of history, like the old buildings, I am very interested to investigate about this, so the best way is to speak to English people. I'd like this so much! (Abdo)

Logan is very similar in his reasons for wanting to form friendships with locals:

I am in this place, I might as well take something on from it and the locals would be the best people to learn from them, of their culture. Because if somebody is from a different country, like if somebody is from India or I'm always around Indians, my experience would be diminished. It's nice, I'm learning bits and pieces like what holds them and what kind of sense of humour. (Logan)

As we can see here, more often than not the participants wish to meet British people to share their differences, rather than to form friendships through their commonalities. This

nevertheless is an example of them looking for integration, as they want an exchange with strangers. Their unshared identity and uncommon values are what they wish to explore. During the analysis, it struck me that most participants use the word 'British' to speak about the local people or culture (Leo, Mazee, Jennifer, Mani, Ruhksana and Zinnia) whilst others use both 'British' and 'English' as a general term for local people (Abdo, Meg, Logan and Robbie). A contradiction in the participants' accounts arises, as will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, that all recognise the diverse nature of Hilltown in one way or another, yet at the same time they all use 'culture' in its singular form as if there is an intrinsic culture for them to learn about. Furthermore, they seem rather pragmatic in their approach to learning about local people, culture and other information, which corresponds to the earlier findings of Brown (2009a; 2009b). Not only British students, but also friendships with other international students are utilised for help with local knowledge. Leo is very honest in pointing out that meeting other international students is only *for fun, for relax, more temporary friendships* and Zinnia reflects that she enjoys learning from those international students who came to the UK before her, as they have helped her to *know the culture experience of the UK as well as how you want to prepare for next winter, what you need to buy or that kind of stuff.*

The participants' accounts can be seen through the theories of social capital (Lin, 2001) as well as human capital (Becker, 1993). Lin defines social capital building as 'investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions' (Lin, 2001, p.18). The participants' stories here show that the desired outcome of investing in relationships with local people is the instrumental return of 'cultural knowledge'. Arguably, this illustrates that they are seeking intercultural friendships to add to their own 'social credentials' (Lin, 2001). They wish to learn from local people so they do not 'lose face' as they participate in

society, whilst at the same time they may wish to increase their cultural knowledge as a professional skill to enable them to succeed in their future careers. We can also explain this in terms of human capital. Becker (1993) argued that human capital ought to be recognised as a form of capital owned by workers. Human capital can be measured by education, training and experience such as the cross-cultural experience that the participants are seeking here. The participants are already on their way towards gaining the highest qualification possible, the PhD, from a British university. Educational attainment is seen as a major aspect of human capital, in which the participants are heavily investing. It is possible therefore that friendships with local people are treated by them, albeit unconsciously, as another form of human capital investment.

Furthermore, the participants can be seen as 'rational choice actors' (Coleman, 1988). As discussed in Chapter Three, for Coleman the rational choice approach towards social capital building is centred on the individual's capacity to benefit from their social network. In theory, rational choice focuses an individual's agency, regardless of their situation, to pursue their own objectives in developing a social network, i.e. to gain information or knowledge. Specifically, the above participants' accounts show that they seek friendships with local people in order to develop their own knowledge of British culture. They have their own interests in mind when they pursue social connections with non-co-national students and local people; to develop their cultural knowledge, to learn how to act and to develop their language skills. All of this seems to be for their own advancement and interests; in other words, without reciprocation. It seems that there are two opposing forces influencing the participants' desire to form friendships with other international and local students; the length yet also the temporariness of the participants' time in the UK. They live there long enough to need to learn how to participate without 'losing face' but the

temporariness of their stay means they do not seek meaningful friendships with local people.

It is also confusing from an analytical stance, that when expressing the desire to form friendships with 'British' people, the participants imply that 'British' is *White* British and completely forget that they enjoy Hilltown's multicultural mix. In that moment, they overlook the diversity of the population. This was evident when Ruhksana was doing the initial mapping activity. The conversation went as follows:

Ruhksana: Okay and another friend of mine... who is also at the Business School doing PhD with me, her parents are from Pakistan. She born here, lived all her life here.

Researcher: Okay, so was she born in England? Then we would put her in the home student category

Ruhksana: Write her here? But here I am writing British people... so she is British?

Whilst the students seem confused over what Britishness is, the diversity of Britain's population also seems to have gone unnoticed, or at least it is not made explicit, in research focussed on international / host student friendship ties (Andrade, 2006; Brown, 2009a; Wright and Schartner, 2013). One might conclude that the participants have an essentialist notion of 'Britishness' and question how this has developed. Perhaps some participants have a narrow, ethnically essentialised, perception of national identity in their own countries, although further analysis of this would be beyond the scope of the present research. The issue of 'who the host is' features regularly throughout this study and will be returned to in later analysis, but it is vital to recognise for now that the 'host' might mean British people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Although the evidence here indicates that international students have a desire to engage with local people, both inside and outside of the university context, there are many reasons why they find it difficult to do so. The following section will present the combined themes of

language, popular culture and humour as recurring issues, constructed as barriers to integration within the participants' accounts.

6.4. Experiences of language, culture and humour

It has been recognised that there is a strong motivation amongst the participants to interact with natives, yet even when the scarce opportunities arrive, the language barrier alongside culturally different social practices such as conversations based on aspects of popular culture, differing senses of humour and the consumption of alcohol in social events makes this difficult. Evidence for this can also be found in the literature, as Walsh (2010) observes:

It is easy to imagine how a series of such unsatisfying encounters, awkward and demanding from a linguistic point of view, and resulting in a loss of 'face' for the participant, may quickly result in a lack of appetite for further such exchanges and a seeking of 'refuge' with co-nationals. (Walsh, 2010, p.554)

The actual use of English language undeniably acts as a barrier as it often makes for awkward conversation. Although they may feel confident in their use of academic English, difficulties often arise for international students when using English in the 'real world' such as when encountering local accents or slang for the first time (Wright and Schartner, 2013; Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). Notably, regional accents often differ from those that international students have heard prior to arrival, a difficulty that Leo struggled with:

Oh and the accent here, because before I came I maybe know only the London accent and cannot quite understand the accent here. I still cannot understand quite well now. Because yesterday I watched the Ellen show and Ellen interviewed with Adele. I can understand everything what Ellen talked about but I cannot understand some of what Adele talk about. Maybe it's just the accent. I cannot hear clearly. (Leo)

Whilst this causes problems for non-native speakers, local people may be fiercely proud of their regional dialect in such a way that it is a strong part of their identity and sense of local belonging. Indeed, Parekh argues that there has never been a single 'British way of life' (2000, p.22) and points out that Britishness exists alongside regional loyalties such as 'Yorkshire' or 'West Country' - areas where accent and dialect play an important role. This does not need to be such a barrier however as I encountered a situation that demonstrates

how the efforts of local people can have a significant effect on the integration experience of international students.

There is a quiz night every Thursday at a pub in one of the suburbs of Hilltown. Very much a local's place, the pub is male dominated and is the social hub of the local football and cricket clubs. The clientele generally have strong regional accents and 'mild banter' involving much political incorrectness is largely tolerated. Quiz night tends to bring a wider client base, when a team of teachers and a team of university students regularly join in. One of the (white British) university students started to bring his Vietnamese girlfriend, an international student, along to the quiz. Week by week, she began bringing her friends, until there were regularly four or five Vietnamese international students taking part in the quiz. A pot of chilli or pie and peas were served during the half-time break and the quizmaster made a point of going and sitting with the table of students. He was genuinely interested in their stories and he spoke clearly and respectfully to them. One week, the quiz picture round and a ten-question round was made specifically about Vietnamese culture and geography, and of course the students' team won. I observed the change in their public behaviour, from drinking orange juice to experimenting with half pints of guest ale recommended by the barman and they attended other events at the pub such as comedy night and a night with live music.

As the two-way effort is promoted by some in the integration discourse (Cantle, 2008; APPG, 2017; MHCLG, 2018), one may conclude that home students and local people ought to be more encouraged to reach out to international students. Arguably, there should be more focus on getting the 'host' people to grade their language and communicate clearly, exercise patience and understanding and take an active interest in getting to know the 'Other' just like the quizmaster did. Although it is a complex notion and the subject of

much debate and research, the basic premise of 'contact theory' can be summarised that having positive contact with people from different social groups reduces prejudice (Hewstone et al., 2006). In agreement, Cattle (2001) strongly emphasises the need for meaningful contact between groups divided by ethnicity, hence the key ideas of contact theory (Allport, 1954; Hewstone et al., 2006) have been utilised in community cohesion work with young people. The principles of community cohesion and contact theory have been shown to clearly resonate with youth workers, who have quite naturally and informally implemented community cohesion methods in their work (Thomas, 2011).

Aside from the technicalities of language use, cultural distinctions often put barriers in the way of the possibility of friendship formation. The literature shows that preferences for co-national friendships are often attributed to cultural difference and lack of common grounds for conversation (Andrade, 2006; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). For example, bonds are often built on shared knowledge or appreciation of various aspects of popular culture which creates difficulties for international students without such knowledge to easily take part in social interaction. Zinnia describes the struggle to join in regular conversations because she does not know much about popular culture such as music, celebrity, film and television, and the elation she felt when she finally understood something:

I try to make a night out with them but I can't join in with the conversation. I don't understand what they are talking about. I mean I understand what you're talking from the words but, like if you say about recent gossip about anything I don't know! [laughs] so this is my weakness. I mean, I wouldn't, couldn't really take part in it, like TV. But I remember one time on the train, somebody talking about a BBC documentary and at that time I watch the documentary and I totally understand what they talking about! So I feel very happy! (Zinnia)

Zinnia continues to talk at length about her endeavours to make friendships with local students. Although she referred to the rumour back home that the British are *reserved and not very easy to talk to*, she also acknowledges the role of cultural differences stemming from her home country. She suggests that most Burmese students are shy and that their

educational background conditions them into thinking that school is for study, not for socialising:

All the Burmese students they are very shy and not very talk too much to other people so we just try to talk to ourselves. Another point is Burmese students, they're very focused on the study. In Burmese high school we just only have... we don't have the PE etc. We don't have other extracurricular activities. So it sounds like we not supposed to do any other things when we study, I think the same concerns have come to the UK. I heard that some of them don't try any society but they try to keep their grade high. (Zinnia)

Previous research focused on home students' perceptions shows that they are not always open to the idea of forming friendships with international students, indicating a number of 'anxieties' stemming from a concern for themselves and for others. For example, they are reported as not wanting to be misunderstood in case they are perceived as being racist and as showing a concern for the international students by not wanting to offend them (Brown and Brown, 2009; Dunne, 2009). Additionally, the attempted communication between students of different cultures may leave all parties dissatisfied with the experience as they have failed to fully 'be themselves' (Harrison and Peacock, 2008) which is also reflected in the literature around contact theory (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Hewstone et al., 2006). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) emphasise the importance of reducing people's uncertainty about those in the 'Other' group, and in their meta-analysis found that repeated contact reduces uncertainty and anxiety in intergroup contact situations. People have very deep-rooted ways of being, often conditioned by the institutions that they have been part of as they bring with them certain outlooks that have originated from a different cultural context, as seen in Zinnia's example above.

Parekh (2006) criticises the British 'mono-cultural' education system since he sees this as cultivating arrogance, insensitivity and racism. Cross-cultural contact in childhood has been shown to reduce feelings of ethnocentrism, meaning that it can effectively be 'unlearned through experience' (Cushner, 2007, cited in Parekh, 2006). Parekh makes the case for multicultural education throughout the school system, as this is 'an education in

freedom, both in the sense of freedom from ethnocentric prejudices and biases and freedom to explore and learn from other cultures and perspectives' (2006, p.230). This surely would be of eventual benefit on the university campus, given that home students who continue their education to university may encounter international students in classrooms and an 'internationalised' curriculum for the first time. This is shown in the above example and the potentially serious consequences are further highlighted here as Robbie describes an initially negative experience of being the only international student in the classroom:

Well actually it wasn't very welcome! [laughing] because I had 40 classmates, British classmates, I am the only Chinese. They know each other for many years because they did the BA together. So the first day they are social, they are chatting, nobody say hello to me. Well they just say hello and then they just go on... I was very depressed but that's quite understandable. (Robbie)

Not all participants offered their opinions on British people, for lack of opportunity to meet any but those who had observed British students described them as rather relaxed, interpreting the British way of life as simple. This has negative connotations, as some believe it means they are not under pressure to accomplish anything, creating a kind of inertia (Leo). Similarly, they were described as *unambitious* and *complacent about life* although they are *smart* (Logan), and *polite yet blunt* (Mazee) meaning that she sees them as being rather straightforward. Students do not only interact with other students, however. Meg, Zinnia and Logan describe their university tutors and supervisors as polite, positive and enthusiastic, although this has a different response for each, which further demonstrates the complexity of cross-cultural communication. Participants are faced with the daily task of interpreting not only linguistic, verbal information, but also the culturally-specific ways that people in the host society communicate:

I like that people are always, most of the time are happy. I've never seen my colleagues at work sad, most of the time I am grumpy when I don't know how to solve the problem with the PhD for example I am all the time thinking about it! And they are always thinking of something good and funny and nice, no sad thoughts, no sad thinking. (Meg)

For Meg, there is the sense that she needs to hold back her frustrations as she is in an environment of positivity. It is possible however that the *no sad thoughts, no sad thinking*

perception that she has of her British counterparts is due to their culturally-embedded 'Britishness' meaning that they do not show their frustration in public. Another example of perceived 'Britishness' is perhaps found when Zinnia and Logan both receive positively-framed feedback from their supervisors which is received in different ways:

Even though you do something very small, they say oh it's good, it's fantastic, this is big compliment you know! Enthusiastic! Even when you talk to your tutors, they are like 'oh this is good ... we like it but you need to correct it. Like the first sentence is good! I like people who are like this. (Zinnia)

People are polite which is good but it can be bad sometimes. That's it. Like nobody will say right or wrong in the first place – if I am showing you something I am expecting a clear example from you, even my supervisor, he will put that it is wrong in a very polite way. Being subtle doesn't work with me, you have to tell me it's right or wrong. If you tell me it's not that great but it's still right, I might not get it. It's a bit difficult to decipher how wrong that wrong is.' (Logan)

At the sentence level, whilst getting feedback on her work, Zinnia is content that her tutor is framing the advice in a positive way. However, Logan seems to be speaking about feedback at a deeper level and is clearly concerned that he has not been given accurate advice. This method of giving feedback could potentially cause real confusion and frustration.

Humour is also seen as a very influential factor in the way participants interact with locals. Although the 'British sense of humour' is considered difficult to grasp, understanding it is also seen as a way to be more involved with society:

I used to watch the Little Britain, my friend is laughing but I don't laugh! Even though I understand the words, but it takes time to understand the British humour. I think it would help me to get involved in society if I could understand humour more. For example, when I was in the train station, and a guy just walking opposite to me and we were like [demonstrates getting in each other's way] and my friend who is from Liverpool told me that next time, I should ask 'Are you dancing?' so then the person would be laughing, so he taught me how to make a joke. I think that's very important, to understand the jokes. (Robbie)

Whilst Robbie is determined to get to grips with the humour, Mani talks about the importance of developing co-national friendships precisely because they have their own style of humour: *It's kind of, your jargons, your idioms, you just understand*. Humour is the subject of much sociological research and using humour has been found to help ease tension, smooth out interactions and form bonds, as Wise (2016) argues:

Humour, including joking, teasing, and banter are fundamental forms of social intercourse in all human societies. The in-jokes may differ but humour is a cross-cultural universal. (p. 485).

Wise (2016) found that the co-workers in his study thought of their the ability to joke amongst each other as a sure sign of deepening friendship and trust: 'When one feels comfortable and safe to make a joke and it is well received, this signals that the bond is established – that the 'joke' is understood.' (p.490). Although this is validated by Robbie and Mani seeing humour as an important aspect of social interaction, it is arguably a superficial way towards belonging. Kehily and Nayak (1997) suggest that humour can be seen as a socialisation of men from 'elsewhere' into a dominant culture. Humour has also been studied in the context of linguistics. Davies (2003) observes that the tough reality of being a non-native speaker is that full participation in conversation, including joking with native speakers, requires a super high level of proficiency. The issue is that humour is often spontaneous and, as seen in Robbie's example of watching *Little Britain*, is habitually deeply embedded in its cultural context.

Attention has been given to the 'drinking culture' in Britain, which may have an excluding effect on international students for whom alcohol has not previously featured in their social interactions (Harrison and Peacock, 2008). The breaking of prior expectations becomes apparent when Mani describes the stereotypes he had heard before coming to England and how his imagination about the British as *orderly and pleasant was broken*.

I heard that everything is perfect, but it breaks all of the imagination you know? [laughs] Maybe this is like a stereotype we've got of the UK. You know, movies show you the nice places, London, and the villages which is very beautiful. So this is stereotyping, so you are okay with that and you think when you go there everything is like that. On the New Year's Eve we went to London and see the fireworks beside the wheel. Yeah it was great. A big night but you know the people was drunk and walking like zombies [laughs] and my wife was very terrified. People was talking to me and they're drunk and some people put their hands on me and we didn't know them, and they were all drunk and breaking their glasses on the streets. (Mani)

Harrison & Peacock (2008) conclude that 'the very stereotype of the 'student drinker' acts as a barrier to intergroup relations' (p.53) and the ever-presence of alcohol in wider British public life is observed by most participants in the present study. They notice that wine is served at the inaugural professorial lectures and at graduation ceremony receptions on university campus. Outside of university it was noted that British people drink often on

trains and in the park and most social events involve *going to the pub at some point*

(Jennifer). Ruhksana unfortunately sees the presence of alcohol as one deterrent to her attending more social events:

I think like somewhere where there are bars, that conflicts with my religion as well...alcohol is a conflict, and even if I'm not having it, even if it's not there, its presence there, personally I am not comfortable with it. (Ruhksana)

Although a lengthy analysis of the centuries-long role of alcohol in British public life is beyond the scope of the present study, its widespread use in social situations is certainly seen as a core feature of Britishness by the participants. This is an important observation as it creates a potential barrier to participation for those who feel uncomfortable around alcohol, such as Ruhksana.

Language, culturally-specific ways of communicating and distinct cultural practices have been framed here as difficulties for those who wish to establish friendships with local people and these aspects all have an effect on the participants' 'sense of belonging' that is encouraged in the discourses of integration. This chapter has so far highlighted the participants' observations about Britain, their efforts to make sense of life in the UK and the barriers to participation that are evident in their accounts. The participants also comment explicitly on their feelings of belonging in their everyday lives, which will now be presented under the themes of transnationalism, food, and everyday practices.

6.5. Themes of belonging

As mentioned previously, much policy literature places a focus on a sense of belonging as an important factor in the integration process (Cantle, 2004; SIC, n.d.; Kaufmann, 2016; Casey, 2016). Since the Casey review (2016), the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration has been set up to 'drive forward a cross-party conversation on policy solutions to break down barriers to integration and create opportunities for people from all walks of life to build bonds of trust.' (APPG, 2017, online). The APPG is critical that the

aforementioned (DCLG, 2012) government strategy of a localised response to integration has not been given any priority. It calls for a national immigrant integration strategy, such as the investment in initiatives aimed at engaging with young immigrants to foster within them a sense of belonging to Britain. The APPG argues for a country whose residents are able to 'prosper, to live peacefully and to experience a sense of belonging within their community and nation' (p.37). Indeed, the policy recommendation is usually that initiatives are directed at localised schemes in which diverse groups of individuals in the community work together on common projects to foster within them a shared sense of belonging. The Community Cohesion Manager described the local projects in Hilltown:

We go out into the communities and we try to find people who can act as community connectors, who can link people together? For us, one of the ways of breaking down barriers between people is to get them talking to each other, so whether that's organising community events, doing projects that bring people together on a shared issue, such as a local park, maybe they're concerned about their children's education so you can get them together on that shared issue. (Community Cohesion Manager)

Given its prominence in the literature, this section will discuss how a sense of belonging is developed by the study's participants. Whilst the integration discourse uses the notion of the sense of belonging, there is little evidence of what this actually means. I therefore use May's definition of 'belonging' as 'feeling at ease with one's self and one's social, cultural, relational and material contexts.' (May, 2013, p.4) during the interpretation of the participants' stories in this chapter, whilst also scrutinising their accounts for significant statements alluding to the notion of belonging. The first theme is identified as 'transnational shades of belonging' and highlights the sense that the participants are caught between the worlds of home and away.

6.5.1. Transnational shades of belonging

It is important firstly to re-assert that the contentious label of 'international student' in itself creates a sense of temporary displacement, of not belonging in any fixed place (Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). Moreover, international students are told in no uncertain terms, from the

outset, that they can only stay in Britain for the duration of their studies. Really, one might conclude that there is little hope of the participants ever feeling a sense of belonging as there is much pressure on them to leave Britain once their studies are complete. Not only pressure from official bodies, but also pressure from their family and even pressure from themselves is revealed in their accounts. To illustrate, having meaningful contact with her family is pulling Zinnia to return home as her mother does not use social media or phone to update her on the family situation:

This time my sister visited me and she talk about our family situation... my brother and...maybe in April after I submit I will go back and have a look how things are going! Because my mother is not a person that tells me every single stuff. Some Burmese students they have a very specific time every day, so they get to know what is going on with their family but my mum and dad doesn't like this. They not talking to me about stuff so I don't know what's going on in the family so I will go back at the end of April. (Zinnia)

Ruhksana does speak to her family every day but she feels the pressure from her parents to get married and move back to Pakistan. She wants to complete her PhD however and so she is torn between her commitments to herself, to move forward in her career, and her sense of duty to her family:

My parents want me to get married now and that's making me not very happy! PhD first! The thing is my parents they are now being ... they both were ill last few months, they both are diabetic so now they are like pressure, no, come, what are you doing living so far way? You need to get married now! [laughing] (Ruhksana)

Abdo describes the pressure on him to finish his PhD because of new Home Office rules, because he has a job contract with an Iraqi university and because his family took a financial risk to help him pay for his studies:

No sleeping, no take rest, just studying. I spend all the night in the university, because you know, you get pressure because we just have this last year I have to finish. You know, the new rules give you no extension, if you didn't finish in four years you have to suspend your study...Therefore I don't want to face this problem. Also I have to go home because I am in contract with the Ministry of Education – they say when I finish my study I have to go back, because they spend a lot of money on me, so therefore... there is no way. I prefer to stay here, but I put the house of my father in the bank, if you don't go back the house of my father, they will sell it. Yes. Therefore I have to go because my family they all will be at risk. (Abdo)

However much their temporary status is emphasised, or however much pressure they are under to return home, their feeling of being at ease with the social, cultural, relational and material contexts in which they find themselves still might be seen as a way of belonging (May, 2013). The notion of 'natural transnationals' was flagged up in Chapter Five, as the

participants have seen and experienced different ways of being through work, education and social interaction, perhaps signalling that they are adaptive in their ways of belonging. As natural transnationals, the participants identify as members of multiple social groups so they experience belonging in a multitude of ways. For example, whilst Mani, Ruhksana and Abdo feel a sense of kinship with others who share their religious beliefs, they also identify as members of other groups such as 'Researcher', 'Artist', 'Accountant' 'International student' or 'Teacher'.

A sense of not belonging anywhere is illustrated with Leo's explanation, although even then he is quite content to feel this way and certainly does not come across as isolated or unhappy:

Maybe not much belonging. But even in China I don't have the sense of belonging to somewhere. There is not that feeling for me at least. Because maybe, you know I like change, I like various things. I don't like I want life stay the same all the time. That's just one reason I moved here for PhD.
(Leo)

Some describe their experience as if they are tourists taking advantage of their time in the UK to do some sight-seeing whilst they have the chance. Zinnia had a definite tick-list of places she wanted to visit, such as Stratford on Avon, Shrewsbury and Llandudno and she visited these on a coach tour with other British tourists. A layered sense of belonging emerges as Zinnia does these tourist-type activities and sees Hilltown as her *familiar home* which is *comfortable and relaxed* that she can return to in between exploring other parts of the UK. Robbie is also very well-travelled and he tries to *just open mind to enjoy life* and travelling is one of the ways in which he *makes friends and talks to different people*. Meanwhile, Ruhksana shows an urgency to visit some places before her time in the UK runs out, although she does not know where to go:

I am thinking to plan some time out to see some nice places of the UK before I leave, to enjoy some time. But still I haven't found any nice place, like I don't know where to go, where to visit, where to take my parents...I was thinking that it is the last year in the UK so I must visit some nice places!
(Ruhksana)

In a similar vein, Mazee's efforts to integrate socio-culturally stem from a place of curiosity. She goes to nightclubs occasionally *just for experience sake* and to *see what's happening*. Although she does not like crowds, preferring to stay at home, she explains that it is important to *get involved in the town where you stay*. She tries things to make her friends happy but without making too much effort to get involved because she is only there temporarily. This is a tokenistic way of participating; she has no deep desire to get more involved as she knows she will return to Nigeria after her PhD.

On a deeper level, some participants show an aspiration to understand the history and culture of Britain. This is evident when Jennifer recalls a visit to a museum:

I like how the people in the UK historically give importance to education. To the history. I went to Oxford in September and I went to the Geography museum... How they respect the history, and respect the science. And I was really really emotional, I wanted to cry. You know all these...you know you are learning the history, how it's developed, that's the most... I am a bit museum girl. I like visiting UK museums. That is the most important thing. (Jennifer)

Robbie comments on his individual capacity to create a sense of belonging and generate his own opportunities to integrate. If he hears people say anything negative about Hilltown, he is quick to defend it and shows a great fondness for it. Robbie sees things in reverse to the others, as he suggests that having a sense of belonging leads to developing a love for the city rather than the other way round:

When people say 'Hilltown, where is it?' or say negative things about it, I will try and defend it and say you're wrong. So it's very important, because you live in a city... If you are like 'oh I just come here, stay here for a while, this is somewhere I have to be' then somebody might throw the rubbish on the ground, and don't look after this city and they don't make friends because they think 'oh I don't belong to here, I'm just gonna go.' But it's different, if you have a sense of belonging you will start to love this city and it will make your life more happy. (Robbie)

For Meg, it is important to feel like she is *doing something useful* and that she is *interacting with others in a meaningful way*. She feels a sense of belonging once she finds employment and begins to earn money and have camaraderie with her colleagues. Further to this, doing projects with her academic colleagues secures her sense of self-worth and therefore her sense of belonging as this replaces her previous negative experience of having unfriendly housemates (discussed in Chapter Seven). In a similar vein, Ruhksana

feels a part of the society because she knows the people around her. She feels a responsibility to return something to it:

Even, taking from the very minor things, like walking on the road, where there is some old person so they are carrying something I always like carry their stuff up to where they are walking to... Erm, sense of belonging might be a big word, but yes I do have some kind of ... I am quite comfortable here now, because I know the place, I know the people around me. (Ruhksana)

Mazee takes responsibility for her own sense of belonging, which she regards as being *maybe sixty percent* because she prefers to do things her own way such as cooking her own food. In an effort to avoid an uncomfortable situation, Mazee prefers to stick with her own style of food and declines eating at other people's houses:

I'm not really a fan of eating out. I prefer to cook my own food and that way I'm not disappointed. If it's bad okay I cooked it. If it's good then oh *yeah* I cooked it! [laughs] I never cooked any English food, because I don't know how to cook it without putting pepper in it... English food there's no pepper in it. So if I cook it without pepper I can't eat it but if I put the pepper then it's no longer English food. So I don't know how to balance it up here. (Mazee)

Mazee's reasons for avoiding eating out or eating English food are explained by her personal tastes rather than ascribing any cultural reasons for feeling uncomfortable, although she reflects, *if I am a little open to more British culture, maybe I would enjoy it more*. (Mazee). Many of the participants speak about food. It contributes very much to their sense of belonging and many social activities are planned around food, as will now be discussed.

6.5.2. Belonging through food

There is some focus on food consumption in the literature (Tirelli and Martinez-Ruiz, 2014). Food consumption research shows how the availability of familiar food aids in adaptation to the new country and how migration can ultimately lead to the introduction of new types of food in the host country; a phenomenon I have personally seen on campus at Hilltown as international students have brought with them the food consumption practices from their own countries. It is unsurprising that many of the participants' social stories revolve around food, not least because food in general brings people together. Zinnia explains that *Burmese people we like to cook together* so they invite each other to their

houses to cook and eat. Zinnia is not a great cook, but she enjoys going along, spending time with her co-national friends and *eating free food*. Similarly, Robbie regularly goes to *food parties* where every guest takes their own food to share. This group has a Facebook page that helps to make the food parties well-attended by different international students. Abdo again describes a busy social life based around food, with his home being full of people:

Because you know we are single, me and my friend, we have these rooms including living room, so every day, I call my friends and say to them come and we can have chat, speak, drink tea, coffee, like this and also we did a bit of barbecue in my house and it was like this. Friends, our colleagues in the office. And outside office. All friends which we are in contact with. (Abdo)

Abdo does not speak much about his religion, although it is implied that his friends are also Muslim. For Mani and Ruhksana however, they explicitly link a sense of belonging to sharing religion and being with friends and family. Belonging to a faith-based community is arguably an aspect of integration that non-religious participants do not have the opportunity to experience. As religion is a big part of his culture, Mani suggests that if the religious practices such as *food feasts were made precious*, he would feel more belonging in Hilltown. Rather, he gives the example that having a seminar planned for a Friday – the same time as the most important prayer of the week, Jumu'ah – is like *treating you like one of the strangers*. He concludes that *maybe it could be different if the whole country is celebrating the feasts, it would help me more* (Mani). Mani often refers to the religious feasts that he enjoys being a part of:

Sometimes at Egyptian feasts or religion feasts we can gather all of these people together, many many Egyptians. Even Arabs will come it doesn't matter. That's it. One of our friends just invite us you know to the Eid feast or the sacrifice feast. We slaughtering like sheeps in this day, after the prayer we get a lot of food, meat and rice, so make like a big round tables and we invite many friends. So it's not a formal society, it's kind of gathering all of the people with which we have the same culture, same religion. (Mani)

Due to their religion, halal food is an essential consideration for Mani, Abdo and Ruhksana. As mentioned earlier, the convenient diversity of Hilltown means that Mani and Abdo can speak of the variety of places where they can safely buy halal:

We prefer the halal food so we went to specific places like that. Something like KFC, Kebabish, one of the KFC branches is offering halal food. The problem is, when we were in Cairo we didn't care about that. Okay, so we can access to any restaurant, either it's high price or lower price. All of them

are accessible. But here, sometimes you would like to sit here in this place, you know we just went to the Chinese buffet and it's just opened now, it's very nice. They are offering food which is considered halal, it is halal, so it was very nice as well. (Mani)

The university unfortunately is not always seen as accommodating such dietary needs.

Ruhksana has been to many internal research events where the food is not labelled clearly as halal:

And like okay we are, again in meetings everybody knows that we are conscious about halal food but hardly, hardly they mention that this food is okay. We always are being confused, we never touch the food because we are not sure if it is halal or not. (Ruhksana)

The tension evident in Ruhksana's account, that she must be always careful in case she eats the wrong thing, is another reason why she chooses to interact mostly within the Muslim community. In this example, Ruhksana is certainly not at ease with the cultural context, and her sense of being an outsider is exacerbated. The feeling of not having to explain herself and being able to eat safely is diminished when she associates with others who share the same faith and values.

There is perhaps further tension due to the production of Halal meat being a controversial issue in Britain, owing to concerns about animal welfare (Ayyub, 2015) and the lack of understanding of the importance of halal food in Islamic life. Jennifer was irritated because her PhD colleagues went as a group for dinner and the choice of restaurant was determined by one student's need to eat halal, whereas Jennifer wanted to try something different:

When you are friends with this person, 'oh it's not halal food' Too much halal talks. Too much, no I don't like these things. I don't like to negotiate about religion. I am not religious too deeply. And I find very annoying these type of debates. So for instance one of the Muslim friends; 'I couldn't eat normal food, I want halal food' so we went there. But I am more after trying different things. (Jennifer)

Aside from religious differences, there are also other cultural differences in eating habits which can be uncomfortable for those who are not accustomed to the British way of eating out if they are in the company of locals. Zinnia describes her experience of eating an evening buffet-style meal whilst she was on a Coach holiday with her sister:

We had a meal with a couple of old people in front of us...So you look at how you put the glass and drink the wine. When you sit and eat in front of them it's very strange. So we just learn. Like one day

we learnt how to use the knives properly! And you have a starter with the soup, so the soup is with another spoon, and then after you have a salad and then a main course, after main course you have dessert and then they drink tea and coffee. (Zinnia)

Although she learnt what to do by watching the British people around her, Zinnia seemed to struggle with the social etiquette as she was pushed outside of her comfort zone:

In my country you don't talk much at the table, but here it's two hours talk talk! [laughs] When in my home, we have a meal very quick just 30 minutes, we don't talk much but here we have two hours so, if you don't talk it's kind of not uncomfortable, you are just trying to eat. Also, they don't share the food and I think in Asian culture sharing the food is kind of, what we do. In my country we put the food in the middle and we share with chopstick or spoon, we take one scoop or whatever. If you eat with other people, the other people have their meal first and then you have some. (Zinnia)

Simple everyday practices such as eating a meal are important to our sense of belonging and can differ greatly from one country to another. Not only the food items on a menu, but the British custom of people having their own plate of food and eating with a knife and fork are seen as a cultural practice that Zinnia has to observe and learn. In this example, it is impossible to imagine everybody putting their food in the middle of the table and eating it with chopsticks. The onus therefore is on Zinnia to adapt to the British way of doing things. This is a relatively easy thing to learn and adapt to, but other essential everyday needs are found to be more challenging. The following section will discuss healthcare and personal care as issues that were mentioned by all participants as having an effect on their everyday sense of belonging.

6.5.3. Belonging through everyday practices

A consistent marker of integration in the policy discourse is that everybody should have access to healthcare, yet language barriers may cause difficulties for immigrants needing to speak to a nurse, doctor or dentist and a lack of information about what services are available and how to contact them might also prevent access (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Nobody can deny that good health is central to overall wellbeing. It also plays a part in the level of participation in society as well as the nature of participation. The OECD (2015) suggests that healthier immigrants can work and earn more and in turn can build wider

social networks. This is seen as a cyclical process as fuller participation and integration in turn improves health outcomes.

Although they have all accessed healthcare whilst in the UK, a recurrent finding was the participants' dissatisfaction with booking systems, waiting times and even with the nurses, doctors and dentists themselves. Mazee complained at length about the doctor that she saw for a sprained leg, *Well they've not been helpful that's why I don't like going*. The main issue though seemed to be that she had not booked an appointment so was referred to the nurse instead of a doctor. It transpired that she had not made an appointment because she did not know she had to. She had presumed that, like in Nigeria, it was standard practice for people to arrive at a GP's surgery without pre-booking. This is where the orderly, convenient way of life in the UK begins to unravel as it is perhaps too bureaucratic and lacks the flexibility to which they have been previously accustomed. This is further evidenced in Mani's frustration:

It's very difficult to book an appointment and even the GP doctor doesn't give you a quick solution, and even the pharmacies here, there is no 24 hour pharmacy here. If you are in Egypt, you can just go down to the pharmacy – you find a lot of pharmacies working 24 hours, and they can give you a solution in the moment. Here it is very difficult to solve the problem. And the hierarchy of finding a solution, you have to find the nurse, GP, after the recommendation from the GP doctor you can meet a specialised one, which is a long bureaucratic thing! (Mani)

Aside from the administrative processes in visiting doctors in Britain, Abdo and Zinnia both criticise the dentists that they visited. Zinnia had some unsatisfactory work done on a broken tooth and had to get the problem rectified in her home country, whilst Abdo had a terrible experience with toothache:

I think this is not good compared to my country. In my country the dentist... Well the worst one is better than here. I went at one time, I said oh my tooth aches, so she checked me and said you have to fill your tooth and she filled it for me. Unfortunately I still getting pain after a few days. I return to her and she said take these treatments and you will be fine. I went home, in the night I feel very worse, I was just shouting with pain! (Abdo)

As well as healthcare, personal grooming was discussed at length. A notable concern amongst participants was getting their hair cut. Their accounts show that this is a very personalised custom and they had experienced difficulties finding a trusted hairdresser in

the UK. They are wary of the price and of local hairdressers not having the knowledge or expertise to cut or style their hair. Meg describes the difficulty in finding somebody to help her with a hair extension:

It's a kind of specific technique and no one in Hilltown knows how to do it and I have to wait to go back to Bulgaria. But first somebody had to take it off cos it involves some, like there is little metal things that you have to crack open with, like pliers? Anyway I have seen it a thousand times and I had to teach my housemate how to do it just so someone can take it off. Cos when your hair grows down and down, you have to re-attach it again but there is no one who can do it here. (Meg)

It is interesting to hear about these issues, as something that is outwardly routine like getting a haircut is in fact a very particular, intimate and subjective process and is mentioned by all participants. Aside from the culturally different practices revealed by Meg, the price of visiting the hairdressers in the UK is identified by Jennifer during the walking interview:

The first thing when I go to Turkey is go to the hairdressers! I never went to a hairdresser here. Because of the prices. Actually, I go to hairdressers maximum twice a year. And so I am not going too often. When I go to Turkey I do such things. (Jennifer)

Zinnia is the first to suggest that British hairdressers might not understand how to cut *Asian hair*. She is not aware that there are in fact many 'Asian' hairstylists in the suburbs of Hilltown and opts instead to visit the house of the Burmese contact who she seems to trust:

I think the first thing is that you need an appointment and the second thing is that they say that local hairdressers have a different style than the Asian hair. I don't know. But because we have a... she is a current president in the Burmese society, she can cut hair. She's a good hairdresser! She likes to practice. So she just cuts my hair... I go to her house. I just make an appointment 'can I come to your house?' yeah she just does it. Yeah she's really good. Quite professional. (Zinnia)

This idea is also echoed in Abdo's experience and his decision to find a Kurdish barber:

Yes I go to that barber. On Billton Road. Because one day I went to cut my hair, first I went one day to Pakistani people to cut my hair, it was not nice. So I was recommended the best thing is to go to someone from my country! They will know to cut my hair. (Abdo)

Mani, whilst not specifically pointing to the cultural difference as such, suggests that he and his friends each have their own personal relationship with their barber:

Most of the people here, most of my male friends have a problem with barbers, even those who spend about 4 years here. Why? You know the customisation, when you ask the barber to do something specifically, for example, two millimetres here, three millimetres here, four millimetres here, if you just describe that for him, he will not follow what you are asking him for. He will do whatever he sees. So we still have a problem. In Egypt we usually say, this is my barber. You know? So sometimes people stick to his barber more than 20 years or so... because he knows your way. Actually I make my hair longer because I didn't find any solution until now! [laughs] (Mani)

There is, perhaps unsurprisingly, very little research to draw upon relating to the interplay between personal grooming and integration. Yet it is clear that habitual personal care practices have an effect on the participants' sense of belonging. In terms of hairdressing, it is quite likely this differs from country to country and Zinnia and Abdo have found a solution within their co-national social networks to remedy this issue. Another problem may be that the language needed to explain exactly what we want is quite specific and therefore communication barriers could be present. In these cases, perhaps the focus within the current integration policy discourse of English language instruction (Casey, 2016; MHCLG, 2018) is of relevance. Relating to Mani's case, anybody who has travelled to Arabic countries will have observed that barbers do indeed have a certain place in Arabic culture; there are family barbers and men regularly go for traditional cut-throat shaves and haircuts. There are similar places in Hilltown and surrounding cities, although Mani does not seem to have discovered them. These issues, whilst seemingly trivial and not necessarily distressing, show the participants' experiences of belonging through everyday practices. These issues are a part of the wider experience and contribute to the sense of 'otherness' that the participants feel. It is one less thing to participate in and most will wait until they return home to visit a hairdressers.

6.6. Chapter conclusion

Using the discourses of sharing as a starting point, this chapter has discussed the participants' real experiences of living in Britain, their observations about Britain, Britishness and belonging, and their feelings about this. Ways of being and doing, values and identity are subjective and changing and for the participants during their time in Britain have been constructed around their experiences, including the observations and comparisons they have made between their home country and Britain. It seems that the participants observe Britain, perhaps unsurprisingly, from the position of an outsider. All

perceive some aspects of British life as being culturally different. This is framed in a positive and developmental way for some, such as Jennifer's observation of British democracy and liberal values, whereas it is negative for others, such as the role of alcohol in British social life as a deterrent to Ruhksana's participation.

Such subjectivities as those presented in this chapter go some way in contesting the importance of shared values in the integration process for international students. The participants wish to increase their knowledge of British culture, language and history by making friends with British people and using their *differences* as a way to integrate, although there is some confusion about whether or not British people with Asian heritage are actually 'British' in the case of Ruhksana. Their reasons for wanting to form friendships with British people seem to be strategic, for their own gain, which relates well to Lin's network theory of social capital and Coleman's theory of rational choice. That said, they all seem to struggle to find the opportunity to make such friendships.

As outlined in Chapter Two, there have been consistent calls in the policy literature for localised support for both settled and newly-arrived migrants to help them adapt to British society (Cameron, 2011; Casey, 2016). The academic literature often supports this view with appeals for pragmatic training for international students so that they are more equipped with the linguistic skills and cultural understanding in order to integrate into university life. The dominant response to language and communication issues within both academic and policy discourses is 'More English classes' (Casey, 2016; APPG, 2017, MHGCL, 2018), putting the onus on, in this case, international students to take action. Yet all fail to allow for the difficulty of learning a language up to such an advanced native level that the individual can form natural friendships with people in the host community. As well

as vocabulary and grammar, language fluency involves culture and humour, as this chapter has demonstrated.

That said, in instances such as their search for a hairdresser or going to see a Doctor, language barriers are present. Healthcare features in the integration discourse and has been flagged up by the participants as disappointing as they have found practices to be less satisfying than their home countries. Reasons given for this are administrative systems regarding seeing a GP and the comparatively poor practice of dentists. Finding suitable hairdressers and barbers has been described as a struggle and participants prefer to return home to take part in simple daily habits such as getting their hair cut.

The participants' accounts demonstrate that for some, the educational sojourn presents an opportunity to re-invent themselves, giving them a sense of liberty. For others, it makes them a stranger caught between their home and host cultures, creating a sense of isolation similar to that found in Koehne's (2005) study, and often pressure to return home. Issues such as finding the comfort of familiar food, or being able to describe what they want from a haircut are important shades of belonging if we view 'belonging' as 'feeling at ease with one's self and one's social, cultural, relational and material contexts.' (May, 2013, p.4). Furthermore, examples such as Mani's suggest that a difference in religious affiliation may cause a divide as people connect more with the religious members of the other groups to which they belong, i.e. Other Muslim international students. Belonging through food is not only an important aspect of their religious practices, but all participants mention food as a way of socialising and interacting with others. Eating and sharing food is seen as an enjoyable way of participating, adding to participants' sense of belonging and connection to co-national and international students. The following chapter will continue this analysis with a focus on the participants' community interactions.

Chapter 7: Community interactions and participation

7.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the community interactions and participation of the participants, and the role that these activities play in their integration experiences. Community interaction in this sense refers to the ways in which the participants involve themselves with other people, organisations and places in the community. According to the OECD (2015), being an 'integral part of society' and 'actively involved in the host country' are key defining characteristics of an integrated individual. Furthermore, since integration is a two-way process, that the individual encounters mutual acceptance and trust by members of the wider community is also a crucial aspect (Cantle, 2008). Interaction and ways of participating in everyday routines such as eating, shopping and working have a fundamental influence on the process of integration for people in the place where they are living. Positive interactions are thought to encourage migrants, by building self-confidence and developing social connections, in turn creating opportunities for integration, as well as enabling the 'host' or 'local' people to appreciate the contributions of migrants and thus helping to build a cohesive society (OECD, 2015; Casey, 2016; APPG, 2017; MHCLG, 2018). Negative interactions such as those involving prejudice or discrimination may do the opposite and presumably act as barriers to integration.

We have already established that all participants have built a social network in Britain and spend time interacting and participating in the on- and off-campus community every day. The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine the participants' stories to establish where opportunities for, and barriers to, integration can be found in their interactions and participation in society. It will begin by discussing their consumer experiences and how they often attempt to re-create their consumption habits from their home country, a topic that came up time and time again during the interviews. This was touched upon in the

previous chapter through their absence of participation in some everyday practices, but throughout the interviews, there is a strong focus on the spaces and places where the participants spend their free time. As they moved to the UK as adults, all participants have already established social routines in their home country. Their accounts show that they ideally would want to reproduce these activities in the UK and the first section of the present chapter discusses the ways in which they do so. Following this, Parekh's notion of Britain as a 'community of communities' is evidenced in the accounts of those who have found a sense of belonging within the settled ethnic minority communities in Hilltown. From this belonging comes a feeling that the participants wish to return something to society and the concept of 'civic engagement' is discussed as a way in which they seek to do this. The university community is then discussed as a crucial arena in which interactions take place, before the chapter ends with discussion of some unfortunate stories of perceived prejudice both on campus and in the wider community.

7.2. Consumer experiences

It is noteworthy how much the participants speak about consuming as a key part of their everyday experience in Britain. There is a general consensus amongst the participants that you can buy anything you need in the UK which enables them to continue their regular food consumption habits from their home country, an act within which they find understandable comfort:

You can buy ingredients in the supermarkets – you can find whole shelves of things. It's a major thing that's straight for people who come from Asia so it's fairly easy, all the time, they know their customers well I suppose. (Logan)

Although indoor and outdoor markets are a standard feature of British life, they also have an international presence and as such are frequented by Zinnia, Robbie, Logan, Leo, Abdo and Mani. Zinnia feels a sense of familiarity in a market in Hilltown where she can buy Chinese as well as British products:

It feels like a kind of community. I prefer it, not like a shopping mall where you have meals and food and kinds of clothes. This is similar to my country. Because people are here, there is no brands, no high street brands. And people are quite friendly and if you ask something they explain everything! Here you have the fruit, you have the book shops. I very like here. I come maybe three or four times every two weeks just walking around... browsing. There is a Chinese small supermarket at the corner and also there is a small cheese shop, they sell lemon curd! It's pretty good! (Zinnia)

Furthermore, Meg, Mani, Abdo, Mazee and Zinnia all mention the quality of items for sale in the shops and consider its value for money in comparison with their home countries.

Transnationalism can be described as a 'condition' (Vertovec, 2009, p.3) and one of its symptoms is a situation in which the relationship between consumer and retailer can continue from one country to another. We can see from the above accounts that the participants can re-create their consumption habits easily in Hilltown, with one or two exceptions that will now be elucidated.

Firstly, although their positive consumption experiences can be seen as a type of participation in British society, a striking feature of British life that all participants mention is the idea that there is nothing to do in the evenings. Specifically, the wish to leave their home in the evenings to go for a stroll in the town or city centre is shared by many (Abdo, Mazee, Leo, Robbie, Mani, Zinnia). Most of these participants come from countries which have a busy evening street life, a far cry from the UK where the shops close at 5:30pm. This prevents them from being able to re-create their evening social practices. Abdo complains that the shops close after 4 or 5 o'clock, which perhaps reflects the size of Hilltown, *In my country, if you come at ten o'clock at night you still see plenty of shops open* (Abdo). Mazee admits that she does not like *partying until late* and can happily stay at home all weekend watching movies but she compares the evening life in Nigeria, *Even if you don't go out, you could go for a stroll in the evening, or you have a family member to drag you out*. She says that she is not as bored at home because she has siblings but in Hilltown she says *I'm just in my room waiting for the time to go* (Mazee). Robbie simply declares *There's nothing to do in the evenings!* In China he would go to the cinema or to a

karaoke party or go and find some street food with friends - activities that are not available in the centre of Hilltown:

That's like street food brings people actually alive, because during the day people are working wearing suits, like the same as here. But in the evening that's when people go out and having actual life. Then the shopping mall close about 10:00 or even 10:30, but here, and even in London the shops even close at 5 o'clock, unless some special date. (Robbie)

However, some have visited existing, typically 'British' places in the town near the university. For example, Jennifer likes *going to the pub* and sees this as an effort to integrate, whilst Mazee goes bowling with her research colleagues as a way to let off steam:

Well there's nothing to do so we tried to start making a conscious effort. 'So what could we do on Wednesday night? Okay Bowling! So we enjoyed it so try to go as frequently as possible. Every month, we either pick a week night or a weekend, when everybody's stressed from uni, we go! When all our works are not going right in the lab, yes let's go throw some bowls! [laughs] (Mazee)

Secondly, the notion of transnational social spaces was discussed in Chapter Three as a way of viewing the experiences of some migrants since their experiences involve social connections across borders. Transnational social spaces are characterised by multiple social connections and communications which link individuals, communities and organisations across the boundaries of the nation-state (Vertovec, 2009). Not only did the participants express a desire to re-create their social practices but also they tend to visit the physical social spaces and places that are similar to those in their home country. These can thus be seen as transnational social spaces and those that were most often mentioned were places of consumption such as cafés, bars, restaurants and shops. For example, in an attempt to recreate her social practices from Bulgaria, Meg is quite particular about the kinds of places she visits:

I think I'm coming from a country where the look of things matters. I mean, how expensive they are, how fancy they are, how popular or how proven or how professional. These kinds of things matter a lot. I've always thought it's very superficial and it's not backed up by any rational thinking. It's just the way I've been told... [pointing to an independent café] That looks very English if you ask me, like maybe an old English style. But you won't see that kind of things in my country. They are all fancy and shiny and so expensive looking otherwise people wouldn't go there. Material people! That's why between Costa and that small one, I would choose Costa (Meg)

Mobility certainly changes the ways in which people make sense of social spaces and places. Some suggest that mobile people are more likely to form connections to 'types of

places' rather than to any particular place (Milligan, 1998). Indeed, there was a common problem when the participants were asked to name the places that they had visited in that they frequently could not remember the place names. They could only describe the type of place and its location, perhaps demonstrating that they have not formed an emotional attachment to them. Augé (1996) would describe these types of places as 'non-places' as people are not emotionally connected with them and as such they do not belong to anyone.

An exception to this is that participants could all name the popular chain café *Costa*. Bauman imagines that 'non-places' such as *Costa* are made easy to visit as they contain 'hints and clues triggering uniform patterns of conduct' (2012, p.102) and therefore the consumer does not need to understand the local cultural rules of behaviour. The aforementioned sense of the borderless social world is relevant here, as many of the shops and cafés that we see on the UK high street also appear in different countries and occupy international travel spaces such as airports and train stations. International students often first encounter these places in their home country or whilst travelling. They are likely to visit them again when they see their shopfront in the UK precisely because they have a similar uniform appearance, therefore the participants find familiarity there:

Yes. I was in Café Cali, and Costa. Just the two. The shops, Monsoon Accessorize and Marks and Spencer of course! This was one of my favourite in Turkey so I am seeing it again. It is nice. I recognise and then I went in. (Jennifer)

Thus, visiting cafés, restaurants and shopping places helps international students to link their lives in their home country with their lives in the UK. Rather than meaning that there is nothing to 'integrate into' (Favell, 2001), this aids in the process of integration for the participants. These places are claimed as important social places and coffee with other research students is a weekly habit for all participants except Ruhksana and Logan:

Yeah first Costa, two Nero. Firstly because it is very familiar, for me, I have the same in Egypt. The branding makes an effect here. When you outside your country and find something which is a little bit remembering or something of your country, which makes you feel like home, well not actually like

home but somehow related, to be familiar with that. And Costa is very famous here, I think this is the top one. (Mani)

If *Costa* and *Marks and Spencer* are examples of international chains which students encounter prior to arrival in the UK, there are also many examples of smaller independent businesses that have been established by settled migrants in the UK, which international students are drawn to again because of their familiarity. Often you find that there are areas with a number of international independent restaurants such as this well-known street in which Abdo describes the warm welcome he gets in his favourite restaurant:

Yes they always, when I go they see me and they are like 'Oh hello! How are you? Welcome, welcome, welcome!' I am happy because they do favour for me because I am their regular customer, I always go there with them so they serve me free tea and everything. They welcome me very well. (Abdo)

This theme is also found in reverse when it emerges that a lack of cultural familiarity is enough to make some actually avoid entering a place. Ruhksana comments on a local independent café during our walking interview:

No I haven't been to it and I will not be going. It looks expensive and it looks, erm, what would I say? In our language we say it's like 'graphite' it means it's not Asian style. You know? If you see the customers there, they see that if they are all British, if they are all white in there, that also means they will not be serving our kind of food, we will not rely on their drinks as well because of again religious reasons, it might be having some content not suitable for us. So I will hardly walk into any such place. But if they had mentioned something, like a sign that they are serving vegetarians or they are serving halal, then I comfortably walk in. So they have to be explicit. (Ruhksana)

Whilst this may seem that Ruhksana is unwilling to make the effort to experience British café culture, this brings us back again to the two-way effort notion of integration and the ideal of an intercultural city (Wood and Landry, 2008).

The physical social spaces and places in the country of study have been shown here as playing a key role in the integration experiences of the participants and the literature reflects that this ought to be a central consideration in developing integration policy (Wood and Landry, 2008; Rutter, 2015). Not only do suitable social spaces present opportunities for integration but people's attachments to places also contribute to a sense of security and belonging. Florida (2005) suggests that cities are in competition to attract 'mobile wealth creators' and that this depends largely on them being attracted by a tolerant and

culturally diverse environment. The cross-cultural connections of international students as well as economic migrants are an important reality as they make up increasing numbers in cities, which has led Wood and Landry (2008) to focus on the 'diversity advantage' rather than the 'diversity deficit' of neighbourhoods and cities. They emphasise the idea that we ought to embrace the potential resources that are embedded in our cultural heterogeneity and suggest:

The creative challenge is to move from the multicultural city of fragmented differences to the co-created intercultural city that makes the very most of its diversity. (Wood and Landry, 2008, p.14)

Although Hilltown cannot compete with its neighbouring cities, it occurs to me that if there was a collective effort amongst the local independent cafés, shops, bars and restaurants to reach out to those who may lack the cultural familiarity or confidence to enter their space, then integration would arguably be easier and perhaps the ideal notion of Hilltown being an 'intercultural town' would be more of a reality. As it is, the international student participants in this study all resort to the familiar, either by opting for internationally branded 'non-places' or by mobilising their social capital and following word-of-mouth recommendations. Zinnia is one of the more adventurous of the participants, yet her reluctance to try new unfamiliar places without recommendation perhaps serves as a further illustration:

Yes, I been to that kind of bar in another city quite often but not here. I have two friends in that city, they recommend you different cafés and the food so when you get in the restaurant you know what is recommended. But in Hilltown I don't have a friend to recommend 'you should go to that place' and by myself I don't know how to explore them, so I have not been to many cafés. Yeah definitely thank you - I will go have a look at that café later with my friends. I feel like today is my first time in Hilltown! It's such a shame! (Zinnia)

Zinnia however is very keen to eat British food and (following recommendation) has made regular trips to a traditional 'greasy spoon' café near the open market because she loves the *British breakfast*. She feels very welcomed by the staff at this particular café because they remember her regular order. Whilst this was initially Zinnia's effort to integrate, she now enjoys the familiarity as she compares this with the feeling of being looked after by her mum at home:

There is a waitress and she remember me because every time I order a British breakfast I say 'no sausage, extra mushroom!' so when they see me it's like 'no sausage, extra mushroom!' [laughs] and then 'tea two sugars!' So like because that kind of service you can only have in your country. Here they don't speak the same language but you eat the British food and you're really enjoying it so I go once a week. And last week there is another waitress who not seen me quite often, and she just ask me what do you want, and I said 'no sausage extra mushroom' and she write it and the other waitress who recognise me said 'oh she's a regular' and I feel like 'oh that's very nice!' I feel very, like it feels like home... because at home you don't tell your mum what food you like or not, you just get the food you like! (Zinnia)

Through going here regularly, Zinnia has enjoyed meeting some local people, for example a lady who always goes to the café on Tuesday at 10am, *If I go on Tuesdays she is on the same seat and I try to talk to her*, which is a positive community interaction. Aside from the physical spaces and places, the less-tangible communities at the meso level also have an influence on participation and, in turn, integration. The following section will illustrate how the participants identify with their local communities.

7.3. A community of communities

A recurrent feature in the participants' stories is the observation about the multi-cultural nature of Hilltown and the UK in general. This came as a surprise to those who had a pre-conceived notion of British society as being 'more white' than they have found it in reality, as the following two accounts capture:

Here it's totally different to how I was thinking about it. I didn't expect that a lot of people like Pakistanis living here as civilians. I didn't know that they are the majorities in some of the cities. Like in that city, it's totally Pakistani! (Mani)

I think... because when I first arrived here I was quite shocked by why there is a lot of people who look like that, and they do a lot of religious behaviour different from other people. I was quite shocked or surprised by that. It's quite different from what I thought about the UK. Because I thought the UK was all like white people, it's not US like with black people or different colours. Here I think maybe it's like half Muslim like you know with the beard, and half white. That's different. Quite surprising. Because I know UK just from TV shows. (Leo)

These observations tell us that Mani and Leo have both regularly encountered non-white British people, which has led them to the conclusion that the UK is *half Muslim* or that Muslims make up *the majority in some cities*. Leo found this surprising because he had learned about Britain from television shows, which perhaps raises wider issues beyond the purpose of the present discussion, such as the lack of effort within the British television industry to represent a diverse picture of society, or indeed the types of shows that are

available to watch overseas. Aside from the initial shock for some, the diversity of Hilltown created opportunities for integration as will now be discussed.

In the policy discourse, one of Ager and Strang's 'markers' that an individual is integrated in society is 'when they are socially connected with members of a community with which they identify' (2004, p. 5) which can be said for all of the participants, whether that be the university community, the research community or elsewhere. Furthermore, the MHCLG (2018) focuses on macro-level integration and proposes that integrated communities are those where 'people - whatever their background - live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.' (p. 10). Whilst it is certainly disturbing that the 'racial and Islamophobic prejudice' found in Brown's (2009a) study gave international students more reason to form mono-cultural friendship groups, the findings from the present study show us that we also need to look at the ethnic makeup of that host society and actually define what 'host' means in the current age of super diversity. Hilltown is an ethnically diverse town, with many African and Asian shops, supermarkets, places to eat, and places of worship, which has been a very influential factor in the participants' experiences. Furthermore, what becomes apparent as we progress through the interviews is the variety of communities that already exist within the host community, through the eyes of the participants.

On the whole, it has already been mentioned that the multi-cultural environment is seen as a very positive and convenient aspect of studying in Hilltown. On a practical level, the participants can find supermarkets and local markets with food to suit their needs and activities that they are interested in taking part in. These small familiarities are taken as signs that Britain is a welcoming place for them. On a perhaps more meaningful level, Abdo describes a network of Kurdish people, both settled communities and international

students, who helped him when he arrived in the UK. He admits that it is very important to connect with people from his country because they share a language and he can *rely on them for help*. He also describes how the Kurdish community congregate around a small *Costa* in one of the suburbs of Hilltown:

Kurdish community is big here. They have like a small Costa in Firhtown, they have two Costas run by Kurdish people. So there's small Costa on Millfield road and you know opposite Matalan there are small shops and restaurants and a barbers. And up there is a Costa. So usually Kurdish people we are gathering there. (Abdo)

A similar example can be found in Ruhksana's account, whose social life is based within the Pakistani community. She mainly socialises in her own home and the homes of her housemate's family:

Yeah I do visit her all family – she has a big family, all lives in the Hilltown most of them yeah, like on the same street and on the next street, she have her two sisters families, three brothers families, no actually five brothers and their families and even their families means their kids are also having their own families and they all have their houses in the street down there and the next street there... [laughing] and she takes me everywhere along with her. (Ruhksana)

We have seen that, historically, the discourse surrounding immigration has sought to restrict the numbers of 'undesirable migrants' (Solomos, 2003) whilst welcoming those who might positively contribute to society. The debate broadly distinguishes between those immigrants who are thought to 'make our country greater' (Green, 2014) and those who are believed to put a strain on our public services and cause issues for social cohesion. We have also seen that most people in Britain do not view international students as 'immigrants' according to a report written jointly by British Future and Universities UK (2014). Whilst it is true that many people show negativity towards some forms of immigration, such as the aforementioned supposedly segregated communities, most see international students in a very positive way as people who 'contribute economically, intellectually and culturally to Britain.' (Universities UK, 2014, 7). Ruhksana's account shows that she has chosen to live in and spend her free time within the comfort of the Pakistani community. Not only that, but she describes her 'adopted family' as one large British Pakistani family living in several houses close together in an essentially Pakistani neighbourhood. This raises questions about the two positions outlined above as she is

simultaneously a 'favourable' international student and a member of the arguably 'problematic' South Asian community.

Ruhksana does not feel the need to meet 'White British' people and she speaks about a *calming* effect when she met her first friend in the UK. Ruhksana was having a bad day, her first day at university. Her phone was not working and the internet in her house was not working so she could not contact anybody for support. At the end of day she did manage to find the faith centre on campus where she could pray. Just as she was entering the faith centre, she saw a lady that she thought looked Pakistani due to her traditional dress. Ruhksana was very unhappy and on saying hello to this lady she started to cry, but because this lady was from Pakistan and she started speaking in Ruhksana's language, Ruhksana could identify with her and immediately felt at ease. They have since become good friends:

So I was really disturbed and I was nervous and confused as well, so I just said a hello to her and on saying hello, my tears were here! I was literally crying and I was not even able to say the one word. So she was really, like emotionally clever. She make me sit, she gave me water, she made me calm down. Like okay, take deep breaths, take a few minutes' she started speaking in my language, I felt comfortable, it took me like a few minutes then, okay she speaking my language, she gave her introduction like okay, she is from Pakistan and wherever she is from and she is doing all that and then she asked me 'okay now tell me why you crying, what happened?' so then I shared with her that it's my first day and I'm looking for accommodation... and that's what happened to me.
(Ruhksana)

This was the first stage in her developing a network of Pakistani contacts and her social time is now spent within this community. This situation has been created by Ruhksana by choice, because it is important for her to spend time with people who *share values and culture*.

The term 'diaspora' is used to describe those who share a geographical or cultural background but who have emigrated, such as the 'Kurdish' or 'South Asian' diaspora communities that are found in Hilltown. Whilst Ruhksana and Abdo do not intend to stay and settle in Britain, these diaspora communities enable them to feel a sense of belonging

whilst they are there. It is not the intention of the present study to analyse in depth the ongoing debates over 'segregated communities' or 'parallel lives' but the above examples allow an insight into the importance of the Kurdish and Pakistani communities for two of the study's participants. Despite concern about the presence of such communities, as discussed in Chapter Two, in these cases their existence has facilitated the participants' integration by offering them a ready-made support network and platform from which they can begin to explore life in Britain.

Whilst the OECD suggests that 'Being actively involved in ethnic or local community *subgroups* rather than in society as a whole is not civic engagement' (emphasis added) this surely depends on the individual in question and is illustrative of the way in which temporary migrants such as international students ought to be recognised as specific in terms of their integration experiences. For Ruhksana and Abdo, there are pre-existing, settled ethnic minority communities with which they can identify. For these participants, the pre-existing settled or British-born ethnic minority communities *are* the host communities. Furthermore, there are many examples of the participants wishing to engage in activities whereby they can 'give something back' to the community. This will be discussed in the following section as an important aspect of civic engagement.

7.4. Civic engagement

In the UK, the Home Office (2005) suggests that integration is a process that takes place when migrants are 'empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society' and to 'contribute to the community'. The notion of 'contribution' features in much of the literature on integration (Home Office, 2005; Ager and Strang, 2008; OECD, 2015; APPG, 2017) as it is a way of participating, although the scope of contribution is not easy to measure through the survey approaches often used in large-scale research (OECD,

2015). This study has found that on an individual level, some participants feel the need to 'give back', which is an indicator of integration under the domain of 'civic engagement' (Home Office, 2005; Ager and Strang, 2008; OECD, 2015). According to the OECD, becoming actively involved in society is thought to show that immigrants are an important part of their new country, which in turn is a key component of immigrant integration. International students are seen as temporary visitors and therefore they are often not thought of as having or needing much social investment in their host country (Tran, 2017). Yet, as this section will reveal, the present study found evidence to the contrary in some of the participants' accounts.

Ruhksana volunteers in a local Madrassa teaching group, where she teaches the Qur'an to young children. She also does some shopping for her elderly neighbour and sometimes visits her in her home and keeps her company. Likewise, Abdo naturally wants to be a part of the Kurdish community and this means that he gives back to it. Abdo often invites friends over to have food in his home, for example during the long Christmas holidays he called and invited them for food in his home. I often hear that the Christmas period can be quite an isolating time for international students, who might not celebrate that time of year in the way that their British peers and neighbours do, so Abdo offering his house as a kind of social hub is a genuinely positive contribution to the community that he has become a part of. During the walking interview, Logan also reveals that he volunteers for a cancer charity:

I volunteer, at the cancer trust. It's a Youth Cancer Trust. It's self-explanatory, they are trying to raise money and awareness for cancer in young people. I am doing that, to give back to society plus I have time, I can do that. Plus it's good to have an alternative perspective. You are fortunate enough to be healthy and, it's kind of a privilege. Plus it's something to do, you're part of something. (Logan)

In order to become a British citizen, the APPG urges the government to make it clear that immigrants must create for themselves a 'meaningful sense of belonging' (2017, p.11) within UK society, and suggests one way to do this is to take part in voluntary activities or

by playing an otherwise active role in the community, which is evidenced in these participants' stories. Volunteering is often promoted by the government, the Students' Union and in university careers departments as a very worthwhile activity for all students, resulting in employability benefits. Some researchers have sought to theorise the motives of students volunteering (Lewis, 1999; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2010) and question whether the instrumental motives for volunteering, using it as a means of pursuing an objective such as learning new skills or having something extra to write on their CV are as important as the feeling of community engagement. In the cases of Ruhksana, Abdo and Logan, they already have established careers and simply wish to give something back.

Whilst these accounts show that some participants are socialising with the people they are comfortable with, engaging in society and contributing to the community in their own way, it would be wrong to assume that all international students would identify with settled co-national individuals or communities. This is demonstrated by Jennifer who, in contrast to the experiences of the aforementioned others, explains that she does not want to associate with *Turkish immigrants from poor backgrounds*. She thinks that there is a big difference between the two types of immigrant:

But [lowers voice to almost a whisper] also I know a person, like a Turkish immigrant who lives in UK but we are not contact to them. It is better if it is university student who comes from Turkey because these two things are different. I don't want to talk to Turkish immigrants. Because they are coming from, let's say poor backgrounds or so on. They are a bit different. The difference between the Turkish students and the Turkish immigrants in this country... The people they get to a country in two ways. You know, one is in the 1960s-70s, your family can migrate as a family, another is like us, to study or to work and you move here. In the first one... I'm not having friends just because they are Turkish, who I don't feel close to myself. (Jennifer)

Mani has tried yet failed to get involved with local community centres to help his wife integrate, an experience that has left him feeling frustrated with the local government's efforts at fostering integration:

Actually, we have tried to involve with the community centres here. So we tried this morning, we went there and it was closed. So the government doesn't give any attention to these centres. But these centres are making very important things like, you know, teaching the foreigners how to involve in their community, not feeling...you know... homesickness? So once these community centre starts to make activities like that, they will involve their community here. (Mani)

In the absence of a pre-existing community to join, the notion that there is nothing as such to integrate into is summed up by Logan, *The UK, generally it is no longer catholic, and culturally it is no longer Caucasian culture or English culture. So it's a weird mix of so many things.* (Logan). For all participants, there is a perceived lack of opportunity for them to meet British people outside of the university context. In relation to this, the Community Cohesion Manager had not considered international students in his aforementioned projects, although our interview prompted him to explore them as a target group:

We haven't proactively targeted international students, maybe that's something we need to do. We need to find out how many there are, map where they're coming from. If you see the skills of international students as an asset, it's how to unlock that asset and get the most out of it. Because international students might be isolated or vulnerable, insecure maybe but by connecting them with other people we unlock their intercultural capital and do something with it. (Community Cohesion Manager)

This highlights how little thought there has been to providing avenues for international students and integration, which is surely a significant missed opportunity given that the participants' accounts show they are often willing and could be potentially very valuable in bridging community divides. Whilst Brown (2009b) concludes that only the 'exceptionally motivated' might be suitable in the role of intercultural mediator, these findings show that it would be worth considering inviting international students to join pre-existing community cohesion projects.

It is significant that the interview that took place as part of the present study initiated contact between the Community Cohesion Manager from the local council and the International Marketing Manager at the university, as neither of them had met before. Parekh (2006) suggests that groups united by temporary interests can be seen as 'Human collectivities' with 'collective rights' and Coleman believes that 'Communities' of adults form not around physical places, but around common interests (1993, p.9). The participants identify with the university, particularly the international student community, a phenomenon that will now be discussed.

7.5. The university community

The university campus creates a natural environment to meet new friends as students on taught courses are brought together in the classroom. This common space creates a convenient opportunity to get to know each other. Mazee and Meg have both bonded with colleagues over the PhD and suggests that shared difficulties have brought them together:

I think we are both going through the confusion state, so we bonded on that. We get on well.
(Mazee)

Okay we have the same supervisor and we like to discuss them over coffee... we are like close PhD friends but I can't say that we do anything else but talking at the PhD meetings. We mainly talk about how miserable we are with our supervisors! [laughs] (Meg)

Informal networks undoubtedly create opportunities for international students to engage in academic discussion, self-monitoring of progress and general support (Pilbeam, Lloyd-Jones and Denyer, 2012; Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). These multi-national networks are formed as international students bond over their lack of familiarity with UK academic and local culture and the multiple transitions which occur during their international student sojourn (Fotovatian and Miller, 2014). The university therefore acts as a passive space in which social bonds are developed. Beyond this however, the university also acts to intervene and there are plenty of people who also promote integration through their work with international students, both on and off campus.

7.5.1. University interventions and intercultural innovators

Universities, in the political sense, often take a group-differentiated approach towards supporting international students, grouping them into a single unit with needs that differ from those of the local students. Such an example was found in the present study as the participants were all offered places on an intensive summer school course because it was presumed that, being an international student, they do not have English as their mother tongue. This is a positive recognition by the university but it could also be regarded as a form of 'divisive multiculturalism' and perceived as preferential treatment of international

students at best, or at worst, a deficit view of them. However, social interaction either informally or through professional development activities is a common way that international students try to overcome loneliness (Janta, Lugosi and Brown, 2014) and it seems that international students find it easy to become friends with other international students, perhaps because they share a common identity of 'being an international student' (Kashima and Loh, 2006). In this way, the summer school course was seen not as divisive but as an opportunity for the participants to extend their social networks.

It is important to examine other ways in which universities directly address issues of integration for international students. In the present study, outside of the classroom and research room, the university at Hilltown offers further opportunities to meet other students through student societies. For international students who seek co-national friendships at Hilltown university, there are 58 country-based student societies. These are student-led groups and their purpose according to the university website is to 'represent different cultures, languages and countries on and off campus, include others, educate and learn from one another while making new friends and having fun along the way.' The international marketing manager at Hilltown suggested that the university is very 'hands-off' unless there is a need to intervene:

We oversee the student societies on Facebook – we have to stay in because of the university angle, if they put something up that's a bit controversial, we can take it down. But we pretty much leave them to run them. (International Marketing Manager)

Critics of multiculturalism may argue that the encouraging of country-specific groups is divisive, which is also a concern for the international marketing manager. He seems to suggest that the British students are reluctant to try joining any of the groups but the Indian society and French society have succeeded in making their groups less homogenous:

But the other issue I've got with all these societies is that... you hear of the Jordanian society and you think that's just Jordanians, well it might be, but why is there no British students interested in getting involved in that? It should be more mixed up like the Indians have done this year, and the French have just got everybody in so I want more of that this year. We've got a British cultural society doing great work, looking at the students get more involved in British culture. But it is hard

because there's all the Chinese clumped together, the Nigerians clumped together, and who's helping them break up a bit? (International Marketing Manager)

His question *Who's helping them break up a bit?* Is a central concern. The Indian, French and British cultural societies mentioned here are run by people who Wood and Landry (2008) would describe as 'intercultural innovators' as they create opportunities for intercultural exchange. Furthermore, Zinnia, Robbie and Leo all mention a weekly meet-up that they enjoy going to, which is based around British and Chinese cultural and language exchange:

He's organising this every Saturday, with some students from university and also some people not from university. And we have trekking or hiking, and it's a good way to involve in the local community and he's also the person who's willing to learn Asian culture so it's quite easy to communicate, that's the point. And even though I study here we can ask them stupid questions, like we don't know how to behave in certain situations when British people are talking and things, so is this good or not? So it's a good way, good useful information. (Zinnia)

Zinnia feels very comfortable in this group and attending it has allowed her to explore questions relating to British culture in a safe environment. Intercultural innovators are simply key people in the community who, having travelled or crossed cultural boundaries in some way have come to see and do things differently. Their experiences allow them to value and draw on different elements of different cultures, meaning that they see their own culture as relative. This open-mindedness enables intercultural innovators to produce new ways of 'thinking, seeing, imagining and creating' (Bloomfield and Biancini, 2004, p.2) when they decide to bring that experience to help the local community in some way. The leader of the British and Chinese cultural exchange group is British and has spent time in China, hence he can be seen as an intercultural innovator.

It also seems that within each society there are certain individuals who stand out as either an officially-named 'President' or who informally, yet actively, take the role of leader. Zinnia mentions one *mature Burmese student* who arrived in Hilltown before her and who she contacted from the beginning through the Facebook group; *She's like the mother of foreign*

students [laughs] Because she very mature so she can give lots of suggestions and advice! Meg also describes a very useful Bulgarian contact:

He's like the king of organisation! He used to organise all the events, all the nights out, all parties, and stuff. If I knew I would ask him directly but I didn't know back then, that he's the right person to ask. He knew everything! Like how to get a card for the buses, for the train, and stuff like that, it's that kind of minor stuff that you don't know when you are new to the country. (Meg)

These key individuals, whilst not necessarily 'intercultural innovators', are seen as helping in a practical way. They have already gone through the processes of learning and adapting to the host society and are willing and able to help newcomers. Furthermore, naturally those participants who have spent some time in Hilltown and feel acquainted with the area have enjoyed becoming a useful information source for other potential co-national arrivals. For Zinnia, it is *meaningful* to pass on information regarding the *academic culture* she has experienced. For Abdo, he enjoys helping newly-arrived immigrants to find somewhere to live:

I have my contacts here and I can just ask if they hear of anything, like actually I got a text yesterday from my friend from Tajikistan and he want to room to live, and I say to him come to me, I have four rooms available and straight away yesterday he took it. And he thanked me a lot, he say 'oh I appreciate your work, I never forget you' (Abdo)

Robbie similarly sees himself as a helpful guide for Chinese students considering Hilltown:

You can ask me some general questions about the course you choose at university, you're gonna apply for it if it's good, and how much it costs to live there, how can I get to there and where should I live? Is there university accommodation or rent a room outside? Those are very important. We do this online or Wechat or also via the friend or family network. If the network has someone. It's like my family, some friend will ask 'my daughter wants to study in the UK, if your son could give her some advice and my mum will forward it to me and I will say 'yes just ask me any questions!'. It helps. (Robbie)

I suggest that the participants here and those who they name as useful contacts can be seen as intercultural 'agents' as they act as go-betweens for other international students in a seemingly repetitive cycle. The university is seen as a protective community with many sources of support and interventions designed to help international students. Yet, perhaps precisely because of the protection that it affords, it is seen as dissimilar to real society, which will be the focus of the following section.

7.5.2. The university as a protective community

The country-based student societies often organise their own events on campus at the start of term to welcome new co-nationals to the town. Zinnia is involved with the Burmese Society and she considers it important for socialising with co-nationals, especially during the early stages. She explains that the society has *combined people together* into a type of *community*:

I think the aim is if people don't get any relationships with other people from different countries, so they will be isolated and some people are not mentally good with that so I think if they are in a group and have some connections, whether this society is their society or another society, I think that will be better because at the end they have like a small community. (Zinnia)

The university also organises a very popular food and culture festival twice-yearly. The festival takes place in the events hall on campus and there are often long queues to gain entrance. The societies involved each have their own stall where they offer samples of their traditional food or invite people to join in traditional games or songs. There is also a stage at the front of the hall with half-hourly performances of traditional dances. The festival is seen by the participants as an ideal opportunity to celebrate their cultures together in a mutually respectful environment. It is a good way to build friendships, as Mani explains:

They ask us to make the Egyptian society, from all of the Egyptians inside the university. Try to make some contacts and make a team for making activities and making events for inside the university. That's helped me a lot and I can get my wife inside this community. And, we meet a lot of people, we invite to our houses, we make a lot of dinners, get-togethers and things like that. (Mani)

As already mentioned, multiculturalism is often operationalised as a 'feel-good celebration of ethno-cultural diversity' (Kymlicka, 2010) and this food and culture festival very much celebrates the array of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in the international students' home countries. This may be seen as following the "3S" model of multiculturalism in Britain - "Saris, Samosas, and Steel Drums" (Alibhai-Brown 2000). Whilst it is obviously well-intentioned, the university is perhaps missing an opportunity to address issues of integration, as a food and culture celebration may ultimately act as a 'distraction from the real issues that we need to face' (Kymlicka, 2010, p.34). The notion

that each celebrated country has such uniquely distinctive traditions may ignore the very process of cultural adaptation that is happening for the international students and even possibly reinforce the local (staff and students) perceptions of international students as eternally 'Other'. There is also some criticism to be found in the literature on the homogeneity and heterogeneity of immigrant groups. There is a consensus that integration 'works best' when immigrants come from a diverse range of source countries (Kymlicka, 2012, p.23). Large groups of co-national students may have no need to build social bonds with other groups as they can find all the information they need from within their groups.

The university organises daytrips to encourage students to meet new people and see the local area, yet Zinnia considers the university-organised trips as being mainly attended by international students and as such they do not present an opportunity to make friends with local students:

Yes it was a full coach like 30 or 40 people, mainly international students. Maybe the local students had already been there because that park of course it's so near Hilltown! So only international students. It's funny but we know there are these big parks but we don't know how to get there, so it's better to have a big group going to these places. It's more fun, better than only two or three of you trying to get there. I enjoy travelling with a big group so you can talk with other people and have fun. (Zinnia)

Zinnia explains why it is important to meet people outside of university, because you don't get *special international student status*. She has taken it upon herself to go on coach trips that are not organised by the university. The *National Coachtours* holidays have helped her to learn more about the British culture from the people and concludes that the university environment is unlike the real world:

Because a university is like a university. When people graduate they go into society! [laughs] so even from the *National Coachtours* five-day trips you learn the ways, you get to know how people, like when they have a break, when they have food, so kind of daily experience you don't have at the university. In university we are all students so when... like the way you eat it's okay, you are an international student. But on the trip, they don't treat you like an international student, you are just a member, so it's quite important. Me and my sister were trying to see, like which spoon do they use, which knife and fork? Also how you greet people. When we are at the university they treat us like international student, so if we make some mistake or if you say something wrong, or do something wrong we are forgiven [laughs] but in the outside they don't treat us like that. (Zinnia)

This raises the idea of the university as a protective community. Integration within the university campus community is only a part of their overall integration experience however, and if the university does not connect with outside organisations, international students may be limited in their opportunities to integrate. This is reflected in the literature. As international students make up a substantial percentage of temporary migrants in the UK, the IPPR (2015) recommends that the higher education sector needs to take a more active role in encouraging the off-campus integration of overseas students, especially given that outside of the university context the host society has a huge influence on the overall experience of international students (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp and Woodfield, 2013). Hence it is recommended that universities should engage much more with the wider community as they are the sponsors of international students and therefore partly responsible for their adjustment to the new location (Arambewela and Hall, 2013).

7.6. Experiences of prejudice

There is a consistent message conveyed by the British government about the importance of creating a 'warm welcome' for international students. Cameron (2015) said 'We will roll out the red carpet to the brightest and best, to the talented workers and brilliant students that help Britain's success' (online). The importance of international students is acknowledged in terms of their contribution to UK higher education and to the country in general. Yet the changes to the immigration system in recent years have arguably had an impact on numbers of international students applying for a place at British universities. There is some illumination from the participants in the present study about the extent of Britain as a welcoming destination. Robbie compares the international student welcome in other countries compared to Britain:

In France or in Sweden they got more welcome policies for international students, like for example my friend says that once you finish your PhD you get a job and then you can get the permanent residence in Sweden, but it is a totally different policy in the UK. UK is trying to stop people to work in here. I understand, it's like you need to protect your jobs for British, but you should welcome people who are hardworking. For example in Australia they got the systems like you have credit and

if you achieve that then you can stay and work, but in UK it's like cut it. 'We don't want you, no matter those of you who is hard working, who is nice person, we don't care... cut cut cut!' Nothing I can do, just make yourself to be stronger, and try to find a job. That's the things we can do. There is nothing else we can do with the policies. But I think I understand that the policies are getting more and more tight. (Robbie)

The *changing situation* is also observed by Ruhksana, who points towards the strengthening of security procedures in UK airports as having a negative effect on her study-abroad experience:

It is quite difficult you know with the changing situations, I will not say it is discriminatory but it is a kind of that impression that the rules are strict. Last time when I came back from Pakistan they even made me to take off my shoes! So such kind of stuff that irritates you as well... that makes you upset as well. (Ruhksana)

Others seem to feel that they are lucky to be able to live and study in Britain, for example although Mazee acknowledges that they are being 'stiffened', she respects the rules, *It's their country – if you don't like it, stay in yours! So that's how I see it* (Mazee). This strength of character is a recurring theme in the participants' stories. Their resilience in the face of prejudice is especially noteworthy and will be discussed in the following section.

7.6.1. Resilience in the face of prejudice

In the wider social context, participants have much to say about being the 'Other' and at times some have experienced overt racist encounters in public places:

And like when I walked back home and a car, a black guy just shout 'chinky chink' and then vroom just drove away! And once I was on the train and it was terribly delayed so the staff just gave people refund forms and then went to me [demonstrates back turning] and then left. I reported that guy, but those things still happen. (Robbie)

Whilst this may seem on the surface as a hindrance to integration, contrary to the few previously-mentioned studies on the effect of racism on international students (Walsh, 2010; Brown, 2009a), the participants show an evident resilience towards it. For example, Mazee states *I've blocked out. Yeah it has happened but I've blocked out* and Zinnia shows strength of character when she was on the receiving end of what could be described as discriminatory employment practices, *And I argued with him! Are you discriminating about me?* Jennifer shows that her previous experience of being from a

non-conformist type of city has allowed her to reflect on people's biases and conclude that it happens everywhere so she is resilient to it:

Sometimes when they ask 'Are you Turkish' and I see that people response. But yeah, that doesn't affect me much. You know, I believe that all people have biases. You know, we put people in our brain – the brain works and puts people into categories. There are categorisation in this manner, you know in my home country people are putting me in categories. Like I say I am from Izmir, Izmir is known as a bit non-islamic and they say 'ah you are Izmir, hmmm' [pulls face]. There are, my home country is same thing, you know? I don't care. (Jennifer)

In a similar way, Robbie comments on the universal presence of *bad people*. Like Jennifer and Mazee, he does not take people's racist behaviour personally but rather sees it as the small minority of the population, *I think there is no point to waste your time and happiness on those people. They are rude!* Robbie feels protective of Britain, so much so that he would not wish to share his experience with potential new international students in case it puts them off. He continues:

I will say that when other Chinese friends they ask me about living studying in the UK, I wouldn't tell them those things, because if I give them this information they would ignore the beauty of this country. I think everybody... we decide to come here. That's my point. You have to ignore those negative things. You have to push yourself, to accept the positive bits, otherwise nobody gonna save you but yourself. (Robbie)

As well as the specific examples given here, many participants describe a general 'feeling' of discomfort in their daily lives, as though they are being judged negatively because they are 'Other'. Mazee observed whilst she was working in a clothes store: *Some people try to hide it. You see that they don't like the fact that it's a black person attending to them but they hide it.* The following three accounts further illustrate the 'feeling' of being judged:

I feel, I kind of felt it all the time from the beginning but I think it was more like in my mind, rather than people actually doing it. Although... Well, it's probably that person has a bad day but I see some facial expressions and gestures that I interpret as... like the lady or the guy says 'stupid foreigners! What are they doing in our country?' but I would never know, they never said it. (Meg)

You can feel that they are feeling discrimination but they will not show it. Okay, I know like these peoples are looking to me with a discrimination way, you know? But he cannot treat me like that. It could be shown in a hidden way but not exposed, not explicit in front of the public. (Mani)

There are a few incidences of such things as well, like if you are walking down the road or in the market a few people look at you but I don't know why that is, I can't say anything on that. What makes them being like in a kind of hated situation? (Ruhksana)

Whilst they cannot detail any particular racist encounter like Robbie could in his account above, these participants admit to having a general 'feeling' of racism. Each of them can recall particular occasions when they have felt like this, meaning that the feeling stems

from interaction with a 'British' person or people. Although I consider the feelings of general prejudice experienced by the participants as entirely valid, without having been there at the time of such encounters, it was not possible to analyse this further. Mani and Ruhksana both describe a certain look that they received. Hussain and Bagguley (2013) found substantial evidence of 'funny looks' being received by South Asian, mainly female, participants, attributing this to a kind of 'acute and anxious ambivalence' (p.44) on the part of the people giving the looks. Although it may actually be the case that prejudice is present, it is also possible that the participants have misinterpreted the facial expressions, words or gestures of strangers.

Whatever the case may be, importantly their subjective truth is that there is an unspoken, implicit way in which they are judged due to their minority status. Meg is reflective and speaks in the past tense so it is apparent that she no longer feels this way, whereas Mazee, Mani and Ruhksana speak as a matter-of-fact. They, unlike Meg, are 'visible' minorities, which is probably not a coincidence. In relation to the discourse of Britishness, it is possible that if they feel an inherent kind of judgment whilst going about their daily lives, they do not (and perhaps never will) feel truly comfortable in the streets of Britain. One would assume that the internationalised university campus offers shelter from instances or feelings of prejudice, yet there are also instances of uncomfortable situations within the university context, which will be analysed in the following section.

7.6.2. Intolerance on campus

Ruhksana is offended because she has explicitly been told not to pray in the research office. She explains that this feels like a kind of 'open discrimination' that does not make sense to her:

I was upset that in our office at the business school they posted at the noticeboard, you are not allowed to pray here. That was something really... I was really upset of that. You know in that office and in that area, like, majority they are Muslims. I don't know. And so such things are like open kind

of discrimination against some specific group, that's not making any sense to me. They say to go to the faith centre but that is quite far. You see, in snow, in rain, and you are only having five minutes, and you will spend all of those five minutes walking down there. So, there are a few things which are making really upset, which are creating that impression that we gonna say to others 'don't go there' and we don't want to say that but that is giving us that kind of impression. (Ruhksana)

This is a serious issue for Ruhksana, who told me within minutes of our first meeting that her prayers are 'the most important thing' to her. Having to walk across campus on a cold rainy day because praying in the research office is forbidden creates a very hostile situation for her, so much so that she would discourage other Muslim students from choosing to study there. Moreover, she uses the 'we/us' which shows that she is not alone in feeling this way. There is a genuine issue here of tension as Ruhksana cannot understand why, especially in a predominantly Muslim office, a notice has appeared asking people not to pray. She does not know who placed the notice there, presuming it was the research administrator, as the action of putting a notice up replaced any opportunity for dialogue. Bauman (2012) argued that identity only assumes significance when it is challenged; that when a sense of belonging comes naturally, it does not need to be 'fought for, earned, claimed and defended' (p.68). In Ruhksana's experience here, the lack of communication has effectively made her feel the need to defend her Muslim identity and diminished her sense of belonging, even in an office environment shared with people of the same faith. This example also raises issues about the two-way effort of integration, as the anonymous sign-writer has avoided his or her responsibility in this.

In university accommodation, Meg gives many examples of her initially very negative experiences of living with *English people*. The following is one such example:

In my first year master's I lived with four English and they didn't even say a single word for a year! Yeah and I was like, Oh dear! I'm used to a very social environment, I have lots of friends usually but when I came here it was the people that I lived with. For example, I was in the kitchen once and one of them was like walking with his back towards me... I was like 'Hey how you doing?' and he was like 'Oh hey, hi!' and then turns back around. At the beginning I thought that they probably were embarrassed, but the country is full, the whole country is full with foreigners! For like decades! (Meg)

The idea of 'contact theory' (Hewstone et al., 2006) has already been described in the previous chapter in the context of the two-way effort of integration and it continues to be of

relevance here. Whilst integrated housing may create the setting for friendly contact (Allport, 1954), it is important to consider whether contact between students from other cultures automatically results in understanding and acceptance, as this largely depends on the nature of the interaction. For example, university-provided student accommodation is often highlighted as a key factor which ought to encourage interaction but does not necessarily do so (Hendrickson et al., 2010; Coles and Swami, 2012; Wright and Schartner, 2013). Merely placing diverse groups of people in the same student accommodation often creates tensions, as there is no mediator to facilitate intercultural communication, and prejudices may therefore be emphasised rather than diluted, as we can see from Meg's example above. The contrasting outcomes of 'intergroup contact' were noted by Allport (1954) who concluded that in order to reduce rather than exacerbate prejudice, the groups needed the 'positive factors' of equal status, shared goals and cooperation underpinned by support from a neutral party. As mentioned earlier, the usefulness of a neutral party is also emphasised by Wood and Landry (2008) who advocate for 'intercultural exchange agents' as potential mediators in order to facilitate meaningful contact. Had someone taken the role of mediator in the above examples, perhaps Meg's and Ruhksana's initially unwelcoming experiences would have been avoided.

7.7. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the community interactions and participation that are evident in the participants' accounts, along with insights from the Community Cohesion Manager and the International Marketing Manager as key informants. Each participant has their own subjective experience of integration but the stories here reveal a number of factors that have had an influence on all participants.

The previous chapter established that the convenience of life in the UK adds to a sense of belonging and this has been further reiterated here as participants find that they can mostly recreate their consumption habits from their home countries. This is contrasted however with the lack of evening street-life in Hilltown and Britain in general. Participants enjoy visiting familiar places such as *Costa* in an attempt to recreate their social practices. For places of consumption that seem uninviting, it has been noted that there ought to be more effort on the part of the local business owners to win the confidence of international students. Although it is technically a town and not a city, the concept of the intercultural city has been discussed as an ideal towards which Hilltown could strive, if the community made a collective effort.

The multicultural nature of Hilltown features throughout the participants' descriptions. Such diversity has come as a shock for some, but not in an unpleasant way. The stories of Ruhksana, Meg and Abdo in particular show a layered way in which the 'host community' might be seen through the eyes of international students. These three participants have encountered friendship and generosity from members of the settled and long-term ethnic minority communities in Hilltown. As we move into an era of borderless social worlds (Fouron and Schiller, 2001; Faist, 2000; Gargano, 2009), conceptual binaries such as 'home' and 'international' are becoming increasingly unsatisfactory.

Many studies have found a preference for co-national friendship ties (Bochner et al., 1977; Brown 2009b). Although Brown (2009b) found some evidence that those co-nationals may simultaneously be members of the host community, in the case of a Korean student, this has not been the subject of further enquiry. The findings from the present study raise an important question about how we define the 'host' in research with international students, and highlight a need for researchers to be cautious when using simplistic terms to describe

people from the local area such as 'host', 'local', 'home' or 'domestic', as this may encourage an inaccurate assumption of what the term means. Indeed, for Ruhksana and Abdo, the 'host' community can be seen as the settled ethnic minority communities with which they identify. Although such tight-knit diaspora communities are generally framed as problematic in the integration discourse, the participants who have found a connection to these communities have a strong sense of belonging and robust social support. They also feel a need to 'give something back' and examples of civic engagement can be found in their accounts. This is especially significant as the notion of contribution to the community is a strong indicator of integration at the micro level.

University-led interventions such as summer school academic support classes, whilst often frowned upon in the sense that they problematise international students as somehow needing different help to any other student, are seen by the participants as a very helpful way of meeting and interacting with other international students. Likewise, the student societies are found to be useful for strengthening bonding social capital. The role here of intercultural innovators is significant and should be encouraged as much as possible. Many international students also become intercultural agents and offer their knowledge to others new to the university.

The chapter has found instances of racist encounters and a general feeling of prejudice, although the participants show a certain resilience in the face of this. Contact theory has been used to speculate why Meg had such a difficult time whilst living with British people and it has been suggested that the role of an intercultural mediator may ease such tensions. The reflective calmness in which they describe their experiences and their resilience in the face of adversity portrayed throughout the interviews has important consequences for the study's broader findings, as their accounts do not tend to fit within

the academic discourses of international student isolation, desperation and loneliness as found in some aforementioned studies (Sawir et al., 2008; Brown, 2009a; Janta et al., 2014). The next chapter will focus on the ways in which participants mobilise the social capital available from their networks to find information, accommodation and employment.

Chapter 8: The role of social capital in finding information, accommodation and employment

8.1. Introduction

It has already been suggested that the formation of social ties is perhaps the most important aspect of support for international students adjusting to living in the UK (Brown and Holloway, 2008; Hendrickson et al., 2010; Bethel et al., 2016). In addition to support, the present study found that social contacts allow the participants access to information, accommodation and employment specifically. Lin (2001) posits that social capital is a resource that becomes available to individuals through their social ties, that they can use for a certain purpose. Whilst they maintain ties with their friends and family back home, the participants in this study arrived in Hilltown with little or no social network thus little or no access to social capital resources. We can see from their network maps in Chapter Five that they have since built a social network in Britain, and the stories we have heard so far have shown the ways that they have been observing Britain, and interacting and participating in society.

Social capital as a resource can be mobilised through the social contacts that the participants have made, which in turn has an influence on their integration experiences. To reiterate, Lin (2001) outlines four ways in which social capital can result in benefits for the individual. For a start, it simply enables the flow of information between social contacts, hence those with a more diverse range of social contacts have access to more varied information and more opportunities for integration. Next, social capital can be used to exert influence and allow contacts to 'put in a word' for each other, potentially increasing opportunities in terms of finding work or housing. Similarly, social capital can add to an individual's 'social credentials' meaning that social ties can act as a kind of evidence base, proving that the individual has access to other resources through his or her social capital.

Finally social capital can also be used to reinforce identity, thereby providing reassurance and emotional support (Lin, 2001, p.6). There is much evidence in the participants' accounts to support aspects of this theory. The previous chapters have illustrated, for example, how participants seek co-national friendships for emotional support during their adaptation to living in Hilltown and how they wish to form friendships with local people to help them learn about Britain. The present chapter will work further with this theory to examine how the participants have acted independently and used rational choice (Coleman, 1988; 1990) to mobilise the social capital from their social networks in order to enable their own participation in terms of finding information, accommodation and employment.

8.2. Access to information

International students need access to many different types of information, from practical information such as where to find accommodation, employment, places of worship or suitable food products, to social information such as finding out 'what's on' or where to go. At first, they need to find out about the university itself. All universities have websites with an area for international students, offering advice about moving to the UK and the university website is usually the first contact that international students have with the host country. However, the nature of this orientation advice is usually practical and generic and therefore the participants naturally turn to their social contacts with more specific questions and for *unbiased honest answers* (Mani). Since all students have specific needs, it is usually more useful to speak to other co-national students prior to and soon after arrival. Meg described one of her co-national course mates as *playing the role of the tour guide* and Zinnia explains the need for a Burmese perspective:

The university does help with that kind of preparation, like how to enrol, and that kind of stuff, what to bring, but it's general, it applies to all international students. But our own Burmese students we have our own kind of things. It's not very personalised for Burmese students. (Zinnia)

Aside from orientation advice, the participants are all interested in participating in non-academic activities and getting to know the local area. It was found that, whilst the university is mostly seen as a *trusted place for information* (Leo) about events, both on-campus and in its surroundings, there is a shared observation of the paucity of signposting to the information available for those who wish to extend their social interactions beyond university-organised events. For example, although Logan has been to the theatres and art galleries in two nearby cities, he has not been to the theatre in Hilltown because he does not feel that he has been given relevant information. During our walking interview, he refers to a large banner advertising an exhibition, hanging from the outer wall of the art gallery, as ineffective:

That's interesting but I've not been there. Actually it's strange because I've gone to almost all in other cities nearby, but haven't been here. I knew it was there but nobody cared to hype it, that kind of thing. Like people recommend you should go there, you should go to this night, this is good, that's good. Nobody. Plus, there's not that much marketing. Until you showed me this thing, I would never have noticed this. (Logan)

This is curious given that the exhibition in question was organised by students of the university. By coincidence, Robbie and Mani were on the organising committee and actually designed the banner. Although it has made the effort to link students' work to the local art gallery, perhaps this instance reveals an opportunity for the university to share such student-led community participation more effectively. Likewise, as I pointed to the various posters pinned to a community noticeboard during our walking interview, all participants expressed an interest in finding out more about the local community groups advertising activities such as singing, painting, hiking and knitting. Whilst using her phone to take a photograph of a hiking group poster, Ruhksana admitted that she *did not know such things exist*.

Woolcock's (2001) theory of 'linking' social capital might suggest that the university would be a useful source of information about outside events, although that is not reflected in the experiences of the present study's participants. It seems that there is simply a lack of

information about the kinds of activities that exist in the community that might appeal to the participants if only they knew. A significant missed opportunity is demonstrated here, as events such as these could play an important role in the integration experiences of students, and supposedly create an opportunity for them to meet local people.

In the absence of information, most participants are adept at using the internet to look for information online. There are comprehensive 'what's on' style websites in most cities nearby and a few complain that there is not one for Hilltown (Leo, Robbie, Jennifer, Mani). Whilst there is a lack of a comprehensive information hub detailing 'what's on' in Hilltown, there is a continuous stream of information by word-of-mouth, during outings with friends or informal encounters with other research students, and social media is ever-present. Their social networks, or more specifically, recommendations from co-national and international student friends, play a major role in influencing their preferred social spaces and Robbie summarises *If nobody tells me about this, I don't really know there is something happening here.* (Robbie). Abdo always goes to places that are recommended and he describes the continuity and influence of word-of mouth:

Yes, always we go to recommended places. Because they try it and they tell us it's very nice, it's good, so I will go there and they give me the address. I tried one restaurant and it was very nice, based on the recommendation of my friend, so I told my other friends, please go to this restaurant... and so on! (Abdo)

The walking interview enabled this theme to emerge further as the participants were asked about the different public social spaces such as cafés, parks, restaurants and shops. With the exception of Meg, Robbie and Jennifer, all participants showed an unfamiliarity with central greenspaces and independent shops, bars and cafés. Unless somebody had recommended a place or they recognised it as an international chain, they would not seek to go there, a significant issue that was discussed in Chapter Seven. One unexpected finding was that the walking interview in itself was seen as a source of inspiration as the participants thanked me for telling them about the local places. In that moment, our

relationship effectively became a source of social capital that allowed them to access information.

In theory, the common notion of 'word-of mouth' can be seen as a social capital resource in the form of information flow (Lin, 2001; Huang, 2008; King et al., 2014). Information is transmitted between contacts along social ties. The structure of these ties regulates how and to whom the information is spread. For example, in Abdo's example above he is talking about a Kurdish restaurant in a nearby city. He has told his friends about the restaurant and they in turn have told their friends. We can see from Abdo's network map and the information presented in Chapter Five that he has a dense network of international student friends. He suggests that in this instance, word of mouth recommendations about this restaurant have spread throughout his research office to other international students. Abdo worked with me to make a simple sketch of this during our interview (Appendix 6).

Word-of-mouth also finds its way into the online transnational social networks of the participants. Electronic word-of-mouth, defined as 'any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet' (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p.39) has attracted much interest in recent years (King et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016) although extant research tends to focus on the benefit of this for organisations rather than for the individual. In the present study, electronic word-of-mouth serves as a very useful source of information for Robbie and Leo. Robbie explains that he searches for things to do by looking at previous Chinese international students' experiences:

Okay, first thing is online. We will check what is the previous students studying in England, what they do and what they recommended. Actually there are loads of information available and I pick the things I like. It's on Weibo. It's like a Chinese Facebook or Chinese Twitter. And if you search what's exciting things in specific cities, you always come out with the recommendations, in Chinese language too so that's easy! [laughs] (Robbie)

Sina Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website, has attracted the attention of numerous researchers (Kasabov, 2016) as it has a huge number of users and therefore a vast influence on the circulation of information. Robbie and Leo both use the site to find out where to go and what to do near Hilltown from those who have lived there before. They may have never met the people from whom they get their information yet nonetheless they tend to trust what they hear. This raises important questions relating to influential factors on the decision-making of international students. Although some truths are universal such as 'no vegetarian food option' or '£12 ticket fee', experience is also subjective such as 'uncomfortable seats' or 'nice decor'. Whilst sites like Weibo might recommend where to go, they also recommend where *not* to go. Similarly, the 'dark side' or negative impact of word of mouth as a social capital resource was also found when Mani was discouraged from going to the theatre because of a bad review from a friend:

A friend of mine went to the theatre and she was not happy so I took an impression from her that this place will not be good. She didn't like the performance there, it was like stand-up comedy so she didn't like that. You know Egyptian people are very very comedian, so... the humour is different, it is based on another logic so I think I don't like that. Also the plays, absolutely I heard that they will speak in a very very old language which will not be understandable. (Mani)

Aside from information about where to go and what to do, participants also look to their social contacts for information about practical issues such as finding accommodation, which will now be discussed.

8.3. Finding accommodation

Accommodation is a prominent feature in the integration discourse. Having a safe and suitable place to live has a significant effect on the experience of migrants in terms of their physical and emotional health, their feeling of 'home' and the socio-cultural aspects associated with where they live (Ager and Strang, 2008; OECD/EU, 2016). In the present study, Meg, Robbie, Ruhksana, Abdo and Mazee all found accommodation through their social networks, either by word of mouth, online social media or by asking social contacts directly.

Ruhksana can often visibly identify people from her home country, either by the way they dress, their facial features or their language. She has used this as a way to introduce herself on and off campus and in the following account she describes an occasion when she was having a particularly difficult time during her first few weeks at university. She was desperately looking for suitable accommodation and literally ran across the road in a bid to ask for help:

I was walking down to university and that was a big question like, how to find accommodation? How to find? So I saw a lady going in front of me. She was wearing the Pakistani dress. I don't know what happened to me, it just clicked to my mind that 'go and ask that lady - she might give you some clue of where to go!' and she was quite at a distant from me. I was on one edge of the road and she was on the other. She was walking quite fast as well. I just ran after her! [laughs] and I stopped her and I started "Excuse me, are you from Pakistan? I'm from Pakistan as well. I'm looking for accommodation, I'm really depressed at the moment" and she looked at me like this and she said "Well okay, calm down sister, don't worry!" and she asked me some questions and she said "Okay I have a spare room at my house and if you want you can visit me, you can come." (Ruhksana)

This is a particularly interesting story because, whilst it may look like an example of Ruhksana mobilising her social capital to find accommodation, the woman who helped her was at the time a complete stranger. In effect, Ruhksana has mobilised her *nationality* in order to make friends, and in some instances like the one above, to get help. Similarly, Abdo has a strong network of co-national contacts and he was introduced to some other Kurdish people before he came to the UK so that when he arrived he stayed with them for two weeks:

It's very important to see other people from my country because they – I know their language very well, they know me, and I get more help from them so I was lucky... One of my friends from another city, he introduced me to some other Kurdish students and told me, go to them and they will help you. And of course yes they did help me very well. When I came to the UK, I had no accommodation to live in, I stayed with them, for two weeks so they support me very well. So I am lucky that I have good friends. (Abdo)

Some participants choose to live alone (Logan, Jennifer, Robbie), some live with friends or family (Meg, Mani, Ruhksana, Abdo) and others live in a shared house with people they did not choose to live with (Mazee, Leo, Zinnia). The Nigerian society helped Mazee and other Nigerians to find a place to live in shared accommodation although she regrets *taking the easy option* of using her social network to find accommodation and gives an example of conflict with some of her co-national housemates:

I was the youngest in my flat, so I had some people who were age-conscious and if you do something they are like 'you're a little girl', and am like 'okay... so what's your problem?' Yeah, we're all Nigerian so like yeah, some people have that attitude. So I cut my distance from them. (Mazee)

This is in stark contrast to Ruhksana's situation, as her close friend Yasmin now represents a *kind of sister* and she is extremely grateful to be able to live with people who share her values and culture:

I have observed that it is really beneficial actually to live with people, with the Pakistani people like it comes with sharing your values and culture. Because to start with you need to ask a few things like we pray in a certain direction, we need to like, wash before our prayers, so those facilities are only available in those houses which are managed in that way. In other places you find that you struggle with all that stuff. (Ruhksana)

Those with a smaller social network such as Jennifer, Logan, Mani and Leo used the internet to find accommodation. Jennifer and Logan wanted to live alone and found self-contained accommodation easily online. In the absence of anybody to ask for advice, Mani signed a long-term contract due to being in a hurry to find somewhere to live. During our first interview he was living in a small studio apartment in student halls of residence, which had become a source of great frustration. He wanted to break his contract and find somewhere else for him and his wife to live:

I have made a lot of arguments with the head of the student accommodation and we fight a lot and the contract – there is no chance to break the contract or terminate it. The contract is forcing me to continue the period of 44 weeks. And, the problem with the studio it is very narrow, it just fits one person not two. Even the air inside is not fresh, so we made a lot of things, we went to the doctor to give us document advice to break the contract, I made a lot of arguments with the director of the building, and he didn't show any solution yet. (Mani)

By the third interview Mani is much happier as he has moved: *It's a long story how I broke my contract but a lot of fights happened!* On reflection, he describes student accommodation as a *kind of a prison – not easy to get out!* Leo also found living in student accommodation challenging for different reasons. However, although he found it very noisy, he did meet some friends there:

I think it's good for fresher students when they just came to university but it's not good for me because I have to work during the daytime, I cannot go to most of the parties. It was really noisy! Maybe their life was in another direction... In my flat, there is one Chinese, one Korean and the others is all native here - British people. I have good relationship with them. I think I made most friends there, when I was living there in the first year. (Leo)

Interestingly, whilst many British students choose to live in halls of residence precisely so that they are with fellow students, all participants in the present study are keen to live in

accommodation that is not designed for students. Their wish to live in the community with non-student neighbours perhaps demonstrates an attempt to integrate outside of the university community.

Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept and Putnam (2000) suggests that different social ties can be utilised by an individual to serve distinct purposes with the analogy 'strong ties with intimate friends may ensure chicken soup when you're sick, but weak ties with distant acquaintances are more likely to produce leads for a new job.' (p.363). Putnam (2000) suggests that bonding social capital helps us to get by, whilst bridging social capital helps us to get ahead. As well as having safe and suitable accommodation, a further indicator of integration involves employment, and the following section will offer clear examples of instances where the participants have mobilised the social capital from their networks both to find employment and maintain opportunities for potential future work.

8.4. Finding employment: Work to learn, not to earn

Lin (2001) defines a two-step process relating to the role of social capital in the attainment of people's goals. In step one, they access the resources from their networks such as information about a new job opening. In step two, they mobilise the resources into the attainment of their goal such as getting the job. In terms of their routes into employment, there are many examples from the participants of how they have mobilised the social capital from their networks to find work. Ruhksana describes how her friend 'put a word in' for her:

My friend Farrah, she knew them from the Pakistan Society. So she knew them and I was looking for the job so she recommended me to them and that's how, like then I passed the interview and then I got the work. (Ruhksana)

Although Ruhksana describes this in a casual and almost passive way, the job was obviously not offered to her on a plate. She actively enquired about the job through her network ties, followed up on the information she received and then performed a successful

interview. Similarly, Zinnia met a friend through the Burmese student society and here she describes the importance of social contacts in getting a job:

She has a very strong network and she ask me “Do you want to work for the logistic firm? They are looking for staff who speaks Chinese.” Because most of the parcels are sent to China. So I just give it a go. Then when the manager interview me, and I said I’m Burmese he doesn’t really want me to work for them, but my friend kind of acted as a reference so I get a job. I think in the UK this is quite important! (Zinnia)

The fact that both participants effectively found a job through one of their student societies demonstrates not only the social capital worth of such groups but also their strategic approach to gaining employment. Incidentally, on the first day in her job, Ruhksana was introduced to another *Muslim lady* who was born in the UK but whose parents moved there from Pakistan. That same day, the lady invited Ruhksana to move in with her and they are still living together at the time of the interview two years later, which shows that the benefits of gaining a job stretch to other aspects of her experience.

The study also found that online social networks are a useful mechanism for establishing contacts and building potential social capital. Robbie is very openly interested in working in a British architecture firm once he completes his PhD and he makes a real effort to cast his social net strategically to achieve this end. Here he demonstrates the advantages of using Sina Weibo:

She is an architect as well. I got to know her from Sina Weibo. I saw that she’s Chinese, she works at JT Architects. I didn’t know her but I asked her, when I come to London can we have a coffee together, you can see my portfolio and give me some feedback and some suggestion, and we did meet and we keep regular meeting. I think that’s very useful because she told me her stories how she found a job at JT. She help me a lot and also she introduce me to some architect friends at JT. It is important because you can get ideas form different people with different background and also sometimes, even like job opportunities. (Robbie)

This account shows that Robbie is very active as he seeks to gain valued social capital resources that he does not yet possess. Lin’s theory would characterise this as an ‘instrumental’ action (Lin, 2001; 2008). Stemming from individual actions such as this, social capital is also similar to human capital (Lin, 2001; Becker, 1993) as Robbie assumes that he will gain some benefit from the social investments that he makes.

Some participants also work on maintaining their previous social capital investments. As a back-up plan, there is evidence that the participants have kept their professional foot firmly in the door in their home countries in case they return and need to mobilise the social capital to gain work. Zinnia describes the importance of maintaining links with her professional network. She is certain to return to Myanmar and knows that her old school principal is somebody who she will *definitely need to deal with... Even if only to get some knowledge*. Leo further explains why it is important to keep contact with the Chinese people in their area of research:

I also met my supervisor from when I was doing my master's degree, I talked with him in his lab now. Because for my area, he is one of the experts in this area so I can get a lot of help from him. And in the future, because we work in the same area we will cooperate or do a lot of things together I think. Because it's a very specific area so there are only several people. We are in a group, like a Facebook group so we talk and I can talk with them as well. (Leo)

People often meet contacts at work who they become good friends with, such as Jennifer who met most of her friends back home through work. She finds it important to keep in touch with them, both as friends and work contacts:

Most of them from my previous job. So when I go to Turkey I am still contacting with my previous work. Yeah the thing is I like them very much. Both as a friend and both as a network you know for support. I left my job completely but sometimes they still ask me questions and I reply, because like a friend... I like their character, as well as their work personality, so that's why I am still contacting these people because it is hard to find these two things. (Jennifer)

The simple premise that social capital is a 'resource, which can be used by actors to help them achieve their goals.' (Field, 2001, p.69) is demonstrated here, as the participants keep hold of social relationships that may become useful once they return to their home country and are in search of work. For Lin (2001), his theory would suggest that the participants are seeking to maintain valued social capital resources that they already possess, and that this constitutes an 'expressive action'.

For those participants who have had jobs during their sojourn, many chose to work for reasons other than to earn money. We have seen that access to employment is a consistent factor in the integration discourse as it is seen as encouraging financial

independence, fostering self-esteem and enabling social connections to be built within the host society (Ager and Strang, 2008). For non-EU international students, their ability to work is restricted to 20 hours during term-time although they are allowed to work full time during the holidays. To make sure that they can support themselves without having to work, the Home Office requires international students to show evidence of having a year's worth of 'maintenance requirements' in a bank account in order to get their Tier 4 visa approved. It follows then that the participants in this study do not show the *financial need* to work whilst they study, with the exception of Meg who is the only participant who has to work to support herself financially. Meg's initial reaction was that she could not find a job because she was foreign:

In the beginning I was looking because I have experience of bar tender and supervisor so I was looking for something like that but I wasn't hired which was disappointing because I have 6 years of experience but still I wasn't – it comes as a bit of a shock because maybe because I am foreign I'm not from around here so maybe they are concerned a little bit. (Meg)

By the time of our second interview, Meg has found a job and explains that, as well as the income, she thinks working in the UK helps her to socialise. Moreover, she believes that it is easier to be closer friends with people who are not doing the PhD and has had a positive experience getting to know local people through her work:

When you find a job... I think there is something like a regularity here? People who start work somewhere, they have more British friends. If you're just a student, you have more international friends. I mean, thank God I got that job because I didn't have any kind of social life, even in the gym I am on a strict schedule so I can't afford talking with people cos then I will be behind. [At work] They're interested in my culture. One of them, one of the girls is really interested in phrases in Bulgarian, she is like you have these phrases, 'two birds with one stone' and she says 'how is it in Bulgarian' and in Bulgarian it's like 'one shot two rabbits' and she's really interested in this all the time! (Meg)

Other than Meg, all participants mention the usefulness of working in the UK in terms of integration. Ager and Strang's (2008) suggestion that employment helps to foster self-esteem and enable social connections to be built within the host society seems to be the priority, rather than to earn money. For example, Mazee's reason for getting a job was seen as a way of developing herself personally. The cash reward for this appears to be an added bonus:

Well obviously yeah the extra cash, but it was just some other way to get some experience. I saw working as a way for me to practise interacting with people so... just helps build your patience. You have to smile, you have to think of what to say, so yeah it helps. So that's why, and I actually enjoyed it. (Mazee)

Leo says that he wanted to get a job in the UK, in KFC or Starbucks *to learn some English* although he soon discovered that he *didn't have even two evenings a week* to spend working as his research has to take priority over his English skills.

Mani is concerned about his wife, who is in Britain as a 'dependent' and is feeling very isolated because she cannot find work. She does not need to earn money but needs something to do:

Actually the problem with her is that she cannot adapt and she need to work and she cannot find any job. Even for voluntary work. Now she's just looking for a place just to teach the children how to draw even... just to make any activity you know to take her mind away of being sitting at home all the time without doing anything. (Mani)

Mani says that this is a common problem, not just for him and his wife: *This is a phenomenon happened to all of my friends wives or husbands, fed up with sitting at home without any work.* Mani continues to talk about many international students' dependents have excellent qualifications but struggle to find work *even in Tesco*. He reflects:

And the country needs to utilise this energy, most of the dependents are in the age of, you know, the age of powerful energy so you need to use them, even if that job would be voluntary, offer them a voluntary work because they would take that up without any hesitation. You know because they are at home all the time without any activities to be doing. (Mani)

Mani remains hopeful that employment in Britain after graduation might at least be an option. As previously mentioned, many international students come from countries in a state of war or violence (Khozaei et al., 2015). This is unarguably a stressful factor and Mani describes the political situation in Egypt as having an impact on his decision to return home after his PhD:

The circumstances happen in Egypt and this can affect my opinion. Because a lot of problems are in Egypt now these days, the country is going down. Wages are not good enough... Even the graduate young people they didn't find any job. So the only thing they can do is just to leave the country, see what happens there. This is our future ... so that will affect my opinion of living here. Maybe if the next four years will be better, I will go back again. Living here is quite good though. (Mani)

For those who have experienced work in the UK, it has been a positive experience both in terms of its associated benefits such as increased social interaction and the actual experience of working in a convenient country. Mazee for one compares the practicalities of life in the UK with that in Nigeria. She describes the convenience she has found in the seemingly simple act of getting on a bus to work:

Transportation is more organised here. So when I was working, I'd have to reach work at 10 and I know my train is at 8, I have the time. But you don't have those times [in Nigeria], you have to get to the bus stop, and wait for the bus and there are a whole bunch of people waiting for the same bus so you might be lucky to get on, you might not, you might wait for the next one, you might be stuck in traffic for hours, so there are a whole lot of things that just change your plan. (Mazee)

The aspiration to find work, to learn rather than earn, has been revealed here and with the exception of Mani's wife, the participants have been successful in finding employment largely owing to their social networks.

8.5. Chapter conclusion

The chapter has shown a demonstrable mobilisation of social capital in the form of information flow and by way of getting social contacts to put in a word for each other (Lin, 2001). Faced with great unfamiliarity with society outside of the university context, participants turn to their social networks and rely heavily on word-of-mouth information. This perpetuates and news spreads quickly. Hilltown does not have a comprehensive website with information about 'what's on' and in the absence of this the participants tend to trust recommendations that they receive from other international students about where to go and what to do. The Chinese participants trust and use *Weibo* for recommendations about the local area. The usefulness of word-of-mouth information has been revealed here in the absence of university-based sources of information, although it can also have negative consequences as the participants accept advice on where *not* to go.

In terms of accommodation, the participants have also often turned to their social contacts for help, either online, from their student societies or in their Hilltown communities. In the

cases of Ruhksana and Abdo, there is evidence that they have mobilised their nationalities as a kind of social capital resource, which adds to the theory of social capital. These two participants have approached strangers for help, or accepted help from strangers with whom they share a nationality. Ruhksana in particular felt comfortable approaching a *lady in Pakistani dress* to ask for help, and this had a very successful outcome for her as it helped her to find accommodation. There is a negative perception about university accommodation, which is described as 'too noisy' at best, and a 'prison' at worst. The participants show a desire to live in standard housing in the community, which shows a leaning towards identifying as members of the wider society rather than only the university community.

The participants all show an aspiration to work, mainly in order to learn for personal development rather than to earn money. Some have had success in finding work through mobilising their social capital, which has been discussed in this chapter in relation to Lin's network theory of social capital (2001) and which is further evidence of them being 'rational choice actors' (Coleman, 1988). Zinnia and Ruhksana give detailed descriptions of how their co-national social contacts have directly enabled them to find employment. Others describe how they are actively keeping their foot in the door regarding professional ties back home. The next and final chapter will bring these findings together in a final discussion about the integration experiences of the participants.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This study set out to critically investigate the integration experiences of a case study group of international students attending Hilltown University. It has been a situated, interpretative phenomenological case-study, with semi-structured sit-down and walking interviews being the main method of data collection, and ego-network mapping further enlightening the interview discussions. The study has examined the stories of the participants and analysed their perceptions of their experiences in the UK, to interpret how their experiences relate to the discourses of integration. It has evaluated the nature of their interactions and participation and explored the interplay between their integration experiences and their social capital resources.

It is important to emphasise that this study has found there to be a lack of clarity in much of the academic research on the international student experience. There is a normative assumption as well as informed opinion that international students would benefit from mixing with what are termed 'host' or 'local' students. The present study has flagged this up as problematic because the extant research fails to answer fundamental questions, such as; What is a local student? Who is the local person? Who is the host? As discussed, much literature surrounding the international student experience places a focus on their adaptation into a 'host culture' or 'host community' (Brown, 2009a; Dunne, 2009; Arambewela and Hall, 2013; Brown and Jones, 2013) and their interactions with 'host students' (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Brown and Richards, 2012), 'home students' (Leask, 2009; Campbell, 2011), 'local students' or 'domestic students' (Bethel, Szabo and Ward, 2016). Specifically in the UK context, academic studies often use simplistic binaries, distinguishing between international students and British students, and focus on international students' experience of British culture and their participation in British society,

whilst failing to acknowledge the diversity of the nation, and 'superdiversity' of some of its towns and cities, as well as superdiversity within the international and wider student population.

Logan raises the issue of diversity in Britain, calling it a *weird mix of so many things* but he says this in a positive light as he feels comfortable living in a diverse community. The significance of the diversity of the 'host' community is especially evident when we examine the network maps and the stories of Ruhksana, Abdo and Meg, who have encountered settled ethnic minority diaspora and economic migrant communities in Hilltown, and is also apparent for the others who have found a sense of convenience in the diversity of the local area. In the policy discourse surrounding integration and refugees, Ager and Strang also use the phrase 'the wider host community' in their recommendations (2004, p.5), whilst millions of inhabitants having ancestral links to countries from its colonial past and beyond remains largely unstated. A substantial finding from this study, is that the 'host' community is seen as both the settled ethnic minority communities within which the participants interact, as well as the conveniently diverse nature of Hilltown.

The settled communities I refer to are the Pakistani and Kurdish communities for Ruhksana and Abdo respectively, the perhaps more transient community such as the Polish migrant community for Meg as well as the incumbent international student community for all participants. Moreover, the general diverse nature of Hilltown which manifests in shops, markets and restaurants is appreciated and commented upon by all participants. An important consequence of this is that, whilst the findings of racial prejudice and isolation in previous studies are concerning and may have given international students more reason to form mono-cultural friendship groups (Brown, 2009a), this study has shown that there is also a need to look at the ethnic diversity of that local host society and

actually define what 'host' means for the local area. This situated case-study was conducted in an ethnically diverse town, which has been a significant factor in the participants' experiences.

The present chapter concludes these discussions and consists of three parts, with each part focusing on one of the study's research questions. The study has found that integration is indeed complex, subjective and nuanced. To avoid incorporating large descriptive paragraphs in this chapter, I have included an individual summary of each participant's experiences in Appendix 5. To answer the research questions however, the present chapter will discuss the findings in a thematic way, across all participants.

9.2. The participants' social networks and social interactions

RQ1: What is the nature of the social networks and social interactions of a case study group of international students?

It was suggested in Chapter One that, in qualitative research, the researcher is always involved and subjective. When meeting the participants, it was tempting for me to inform an initial idea of the overall extent of each person's integration. For example, on first impressions, Meg seemed the most settled in Hilltown and Logan seemed the least. Meg has a large social network, she speaks perfect English with easy use of colloquialisms, she lives with good friends, she has a job and workmates who she gets on well with, and she is familiar with many bars and restaurants in the town. Yet further into the analytical process when I looked more deeply at her story, it became apparent that she speaks English so well because she has worked in tourist resorts in Bulgaria, her housemates are all international students, her friends are economic migrants and the bars and restaurants she chooses to frequent are those most similar to the ones she would find in Bulgaria. Her place of work is also one of an international chain, and her camaraderie with her 'British' workmates seems mostly of an intercultural nature as they are interested in understanding

her 'otherness'. In comparison, whilst Logan has a very small network, he takes part in a wider array of cultural activities than Meg, has some profound and insightful observations about British life and also volunteers for a local charity in an attempt to give something back to society. Realisations such as these emphasised the intricate and complex notion of 'integration' and certainly validated my own need to examine it on an individual basis. It is deeply problematic to ascertain the extent of one person's integration over another, no matter how tempting and natural the instinct is to do so. Having said that, there are certain themes that emerged for more than one participant in terms of the nature of their social networks, and which this section will now discuss.

The most obvious factor that all participants agree with is that their research degree is the most important focus during their time in Hilltown. They describe it as never-ending, and some describe the pressure they put themselves under to do well and be recognised for their academic achievement (Meg, Mazee, Leo, Robbie). At the face of it, this may seem like a barrier to their integration, yet all participants have named social contacts on their network maps that they have met during professional development sessions related to their research degrees, or co-national students who are studying in different parts of the UK. It is often mentioned in the integration discourse that finding employment has social as well as economic benefits for integration, as we tend to meet a broad range of people through our jobs (Ager and Strang, 2008). The research degree seems to function in the same way as it creates opportunities for social contact building and social support.

Relating to the network theory of social capital, Lin (2001) would suggest that by looking for friendships with other international students and other research students, the participants are making 'an investment with expected returns' (Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 5), the returns in this case being emotional support from those with empathy about doing a research degree, or indeed being an international student.

Despite the all-consuming nature of their studies, the participants acknowledge that they have to impose their own limits on how much time they spend working each day and look for ways to *break up* their routine and *break free* from its grasp. They all make an effort to get involved in activities that are not related to their research. Through looking for experiences that are unrelated to their academic lives they interact and participate in the wider society, their ways of interacting and participating being fundamental in their integration experiences as the policy discourse suggests (Cantle, 2001; 2008; Casey, 2016; APPG, 2017; MHCLG, 2018). There are different ways that they engage in social interaction, such as going to the gym or engaging in sports (Meg, Leo, Mazee), going to social events such as food parties or feasts (Robbie, Zinnia, Mani) or restaurants (Abdo, Jennifer) or relaxing at friends' houses (Ruhksana, Abdo). Unsurprisingly, they wish to recreate the social practices to which they are accustomed in their home country. They compare life in the UK with life back home. Many miss the busy evening street life of their own countries (Robbie, Zinnia, Leo, Mani, Abdo, Logan) and struggle to find things to do in the evenings.

Inevitably, there is substantial confirmation of the importance of online interactions both before and during the participants' arrival. Before they arrived in the UK, some made friends with other co-national students via social media platforms such as Facebook (Jennifer, Meg, Zinnia) although they tend to see many of these friendships as quite functional, rather than meaningful, showing an element of rational choice in their social contact building (Coleman, 1990). In a similar vein, to find out local information and to discover what events are happening in nearby cities, Robbie and Leo usually turn to the online Sina Weibo community of previous Chinese international students as the first port of call. As has been the case throughout history (Rich, 1990; Ramdin, 1999), grass-roots voluntary organisations often appear at the centre of the participants' social activities.

Facebook features again as the main platform for information about such groups. Robbie, Leo and Zinnia attend the British-Chinese cultural and language exchange group meet-ups, promoted on Facebook; Mani, Zinnia, Mazee, Ruhksana have all met useful contacts through the student societies attached to their home countries, all of which also have a large Facebook presence. These interactions can be seen as a form of online integration.

In terms of 'strong ties' (Lin, 2001), all participants use mobile phone technology such as Whatsapp to keep a 'virtual co-presence' of friends and family back home (Ito and Okabe, 2005, p.264, cited in Martin and Rizvi, 2014). In Hilltown, friendships with co-national and other international students are sought for emotional support, although whilst some participants have found this, others mention the lack of a co-national support network. Jennifer complains about the lack of Turkish people in Hilltown and says that she would feel less lonely if there were more Turkish PhD students, to develop more of a support network and a better social life. Mani is missing his support network from back home, although to show a need for support feels like a weakness to him, which seems to further entrench the difficulties he encounters. In contrast, Mazee thinks it is useful to make Nigerian friends at first, but then once they help her through the adjustment phase, she no longer considers it necessary to keep in touch with most of her co-national contacts. Again we can see evidence of Coleman's (1988; 1990) notion of rational choice here, as the participants are rather tactical in seeking social contacts for particular benefits.

Many express a wish to meet what they term 'local people' or 'British people' so that they can learn from them, and to practice speaking English (Abdo, Leo, Zinnia, Mani). Leo is the only participant to point out difficulties understanding the local accent in Hilltown, which may have an effect on his integration if he struggles to communicate with local people.

Robbie stands out as he has a best friend who is British, who he met whilst doing his

Master's degree. They meet regularly for coffee, lunch or on special occasions such as New Year's Eve in a nearby city and this has allowed Robbie to meet others from outside of the academic community. In comparison, Abdo in particular is disappointed by the lack of opportunity to interact with local people, either in university, or in the wider society.

The stories of three participants, Ruhksana, Abdo and Meg are notable for their integration within ethnic minority communities within the host community, demonstrating that they have found the UK to be what Parekh (CFMEB, 2000) would term a 'community of communities'. For example, Meg shares a house with her best friend who is Polish, and who has introduced her to a large circle of other Polish migrants who are seen as 'host' friendships through Meg's eyes. Ruhksana has found a best friend and an adopted family who share culture, values and food. Her best friend is a British-Pakistani, who Ruhksana sees as both co-national and local or 'host', and Abdo mentions often that he has found comfort and support from the settled Kurdish community in the suburbs of Hilltown. These findings raise important questions and will be given more focus in the following section as they relate to their community interactions.

In answer to RQ1 then, this study has found evidence of strategy and logic weaving throughout the participants' social interactions and in their efforts to build social networks. They have formed 'important' friendships with an even mix of co-national and international students, as well as host nationals who they have met outside the university. They show a certain level of assertiveness and know what they want and need from a social life; To break up their routine and break free from their studies once in a while, to build a personal and professional support network with other co-national and international students, to take part in familiar social activities, and to seek functional friendships with local people. Whilst this is a small scale qualitative study, its findings clearly show that these international

students are agentic rational choice actors, capable of creating their own social networks as a pre-condition for integration. The study's findings also show a lack of clear opportunity for most of the participants to meet local people.

9.3. Experiences in relation to discourses of integration

RQ2: How do the integration experiences of a case study group of international students relate to the discourses of integration?

To answer this question, Chapter Three posited that micro-level integration can be examined by carefully considering an individual's ways of interacting and participating in society. Within this, there are structural factors and individual experiences that may create opportunities and barriers to the individual's interaction and participation. On the most individual level, each participant has developed a social network as summarised in the previous section. The participants' community interactions and ways of participating in society are all experienced differently, yet some recurrent factors have arisen from the study and will be discussed in this section.

In theory, it has been demonstrated that all participants express their 'rational choice' (Coleman, 1988) to find social interaction with locals. Yet for most of them this remains an unfulfilled desire. Language, culture and humour are seen as barriers to interaction with the local people that they meet. These findings interrogate the ever-present key terms found in the integration discourse, such as 'shared British values', a 'shared sense of belonging' and 'Britishness'. For the participants, the British sense of humour, style of communication and everyday social practices are seen as 'British ways of being and doing', and these factors ought to be acknowledged in the discourse, rather than focusing so much on shared British values. The notion of shared values does sometimes appear in the participants' accounts, when they are speaking about their co-national support networks. Yet also, when describing what they wish to gain from making friends with

locals, it often stems from their curiosity about their differences; Their *unshared values* and *uncommon identity* are what they seek to explore. Examples of this can be seen in Meg's camaraderie with her colleagues, in Abdo's desire to learn about local culture, in Jennifer's admiration for the democracy that she sees in Britain, or in Robbie's interest in the British sense of humour. Though I have argued that this ought to be seen as the participants seeking integration, the fact still remains that they do consider these potential friendships as a means to an end, with the end result being increased cultural knowledge and language efficiency.

These instances highlight the importance of 'common institutions in which many forms of life can coexist' (Gray, 2000, p.6) as well as the 'two-way effort' (Cantle, 2001; APPG, 2017) towards integration. The participants all look to learn about Britain, from 'British' people, but it is unclear how they expect this to happen. As the participants have found, there are not huge numbers of British people available or willing to befriend them, especially in the research offices dominated by other international students. However, as has been the case throughout history, the study has found that are voluntary associations aimed at fostering integration. For the Chinese speakers, there exist organised social groups specifically based around language and cultural exchange. For all, there are Facebook groups and student societies encouraged by the university where they can meet other international students, the incumbent of whom can help with information about Britain. These are all closely related to the university however, and these findings urge universities to engage with the wider public spaces that also have the ability to create integration opportunities

The participants do not themselves seem to know of the policy debates, and sometimes contradict their own accounts above by portraying an essentialist perception of Britishness

when speaking about their desire to form friendships with 'locals'. It is one of my regrets that I only recognised this during the later stages of analysis, by which time I felt it was too late to revisit these accounts with the participants and ask what they truly meant when speaking about 'local' people and how this perception came about. Perhaps Mani and Leo touch on this when they speak about the British stereotypes they have seen on television programmes broadcast in their own countries, which led to their surprise at seeing the substantial visible presence of ethnic minorities when they arrived.

Unfortunately, whilst all participants recognised the diversity of Hilltown in a positive way as discussed above, many also speak of instances or feelings of prejudice as they have walked through its streets. They met this with resilience, yet it is still unclear if this can be seen as a hindrance to integration. The question here is whether they might have had different integration experiences without the prejudice, which whilst unanswerable here could form the basis of a further study. What we can see however is that during those times, they have felt like the 'Other'. Meg's unfriendly encounter with English students in student accommodation is perhaps less extreme than Robbie's story of racist words being shouted at him through a car window, yet the participants only have their own subjective experience to draw upon.

The notion of convenience arises as a recurrent theme in the participants' experiences. They all find convenience in their ability to recreate their consumption habits from their home countries, owing to the presence of international chains as well as the multi-cultural nature of Hilltown. This in turn enables their participation as consumers in shops, markets and restaurants. The concept of transnational social spaces has arisen for all participants in this study, although they do not themselves refer to it that way. We have seen that transnational social spaces are those that enable individuals, communities and

organisations to form connections across the boundaries of the nation-state (Favell, 2001; Vertovec, 2009). Not only has this manifested in the online methods of communication such as Facebook, Weibo and Whatsapp, but also the participants found familiarity in the physical social spaces and places that are similar to those in their home country, which are thus also considered transnational social spaces. Spending time in these places contributes to their transnational sense of belonging as they feel at ease with their cultural surroundings (May, 2013).

Some participants have a great sense of loyalty to Britain and have developed an understanding of many features of the British culture such as tennis and art, museums and theatre (Robbie, Logan, Jennifer). Having said that, there remain aspects that are little understood such as the aforementioned British sense of humour and cultural nuances such as politeness and popular culture (Mani, Zinnia, Leo, Robbie). Some mention the British stereotypes that they had heard or seen on television prior to arrival and were surprised at the difference between what they expected and what they found (Mani, Leo, Ruhksana). The apparent ever-presence of alcohol sees Ruhksana avoiding places such as the theatre, whilst the need for Halal food largely dictates where the Muslim participants choose to eat.

Zinnia's experience is noteworthy in that she has made a lot of effort to understand and take part in British life outside of the university, from the stance of a tourist. She enjoys going to the same café every week for a *British breakfast* where they remember her regular order and this makes her feel welcome. Zinnia is not interested in nightclubs or popular culture, but does enjoy meeting people on trips and organised events, which is perhaps why she has also chosen to go on a few coach holidays with a British tour company. Through experiencing Britain through the eyes of a tourist during these trips,

she has got to know some interesting parts of Britain and has also learnt about aspects of daily British life such as the social protocols of eating in restaurants.

In Chapter Three, I suggested that, as most international students do intend to return home, they might not wish, nor have the opportunity, to achieve outcomes such as 'confidently engaging in society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship' (Ager and Strang, 2004, p.5) as this is aimed at those wishing to settle permanently. Yet the study has found evidence to the contrary. Once they are comfortable and feel adjusted to their life in the UK, the participants seek to involve themselves more with their communities. For Ruhksana it is teaching the Quran to children, for Logan it is volunteering for a cancer charity, for Zinnia it is buying local produce and being a regular at a local café. Meg goes to the gym and Leo goes to church. Mani and Robbie organise art exhibitions at the local gallery. Abdo offers his house as a social hub and Mazee has had various jobs, including with the Royal Mail and Tesco supermarket. Jennifer adores British museums and finds inspiration in the democracy she sees in Britain, comparing this with the changing political situation in Turkey. All of this surely shows an element of civic engagement in each participant's account, a pursuit that within the integration discourse is usually expected of those migrants who wish to settle permanently (APPG, 2017).

Yet despite her apparent disconnect from Turkey, Jennifer still waits for a visit back home to go to the hairdressers and she enjoys visiting familiar cafés and shops in the UK that she has visited in Turkey, such as Costa, Accessorize and M&S. The phenomenological approach adopted in this study has allowed a nuanced insight into the everyday practices of the participants. Although they are often caught between the worlds of 'home' and 'away', and some are under considerable pressure to return 'home', all participants mention the feeling of belonging through food and through everyday practices such as

shopping and personal care. These aspects are largely absent from the discourses of integration, which focuses on grand concepts such as identity and values (Blair, 2000; Cameron, 2011) and end results in terms of employment and civic engagement (Ager and Strang, 2008; MHCLG, 2018), yet pays little or no attention to the small everyday things in the lives of migrants such as the importance of recognisable food or the potential struggle to get a haircut. These small things though are constructed by every participant in this study as a barrier to participation, thus further entrenching their separation from the settled communities.

One of the most important aspects of community cohesion and race relations work is to build trust between people. Integration initiatives in the UK are currently targeted in certain key areas; promoting common values, encouraging local civic participation and challenging intolerance and extremism (Casey, 2016). The Community Cohesion Manager for Hilltown has a team of staff who go out into the communities and try to find people who can act as 'community connectors', who can ultimately link people together. One of the ways that this particular local council tries to break down barriers between people is to run projects that bring them together on a shared issue. The idea of 'community connectors' is not new. 'Intercultural exchange agents' have long since been seen as key people in the community who, having travelled or crossed cultural boundaries in some way have come to see and do things differently (Wood and Landry, 2008). Their experiences allow them to value and draw on different elements of different cultures, meaning that they see their own culture as relative. Their open-mindedness enables intercultural exchange agents to produce new ways of 'thinking, seeing, imagining and creating' (Wood, Landry and Bloomfield, 2006, p.2) when they decide to bring that experience to help the local community in some way.

The fact that the participants all have some previous experience of working in different countries or for international companies means that they describe it as easy and completely natural for them to study and work overseas. They can be described as natural transnationals, and there is evidence that they become a useful social contact for others who arrive in Hilltown. It follows then, that international students might be encouraged to take part in localised community cohesion work, as intercultural agents. Indeed, international students ought to be thought of holistically, not only as students but also as individuals with many things that they wish to achieve during their academic sojourn (Jindal-Snape and Rientes, 2016). One of these things might be to contribute to their host community, and the accounts from many of these participants show that they have the experience and desire to do this.

9.4. Social capital

RQ3: How do the integration experiences of a case study group of international students relate to the network theory of social capital?

This study has found much evidence in the participants' stories whereby they capture social capital resources from their social networks, and mobilise this to fulfil some requirement or achieve a goal. This relates to Lin's (2001) network theory of social capital in several ways. The theory indicates that two driving forces lie behind most individuals' actions (Lin, 2001; 2008). They either wish to maintain resources that they already possess or gain resources that they do not yet possess. Respectively, these are labelled 'expressive' and 'instrumental' actions (Lin, 2001; 2008). Instrumental actions are generally easier to see, and there are numerous examples of the participants taking instrumental actions to gain returns in the form of information, accommodation and work. They have been very active in building 'co-national' social contacts. I use inverted commas here due to the above discussions about whether some of those contacts are British, Pakistani or both. In social capital terms they are 'strong ties' (Lin, 2001; Granovetter,

1973) or 'bonding social capital' (Putnam, 2000). The participants have been able to mobilise the social capital from their social networks in an instrumental way to find information, accommodation and employment.

As we can see in the example of Ruhksana running across the road to ask a stranger for help, sometimes the social capital is built in the same moment that it is mobilised. Social contacts are made as a result of them helping the individual to achieve a goal. This can also be seen in Abdo's involvement with the Kurdish community. He met other 'co-nationals' *because* they helped him to find accommodation, rather than finding accommodation by mobilising pre-existing social capital resources. In turn, Abdo has helped other Kurdish people, relative strangers, to find somewhere to live. This adds to Lin's theory (2001), as well as that of Granovetter (1973) who suggest that ties can be seen on a spectrum from strong to weak and then absent, with ties becoming stronger as people spend more time together and get to know each other. They posit that the more emotionally close their relationship is, the more likely each party is to reciprocate favours, whereas Ruhksana and Abdo have effectively 'cashed in' from strangers and seem willing to return the favour to other people with whom they have absent ties, by essentially mobilising their nationality.

Other participants have been very effective in taking instrumental action in building a social network from which they can mobilise social capital. For Robbie, the main motivation is that he wishes to work as an architect in the UK and has taken the instrumental steps to establish a relationship with somebody who works for an architect firm in London. Meg found accommodation through a friendly contact. Likewise, through her Burmese contacts, Zinnia has also found work and accommodation and she even visits the home of another Burmese girl to get her hair cut. Zinnia has built up a lot of local knowledge and has

become a useful source of social capital for those new to the area. Social capital mobilisation is also demonstrated in Mani's intention to build a robust social network and create an enjoyable life in the UK for him and his wife. Mazee's large co-national network has been a useful source of social capital through which she has found support as well as employment and accommodation. Interestingly however, Mazee suggests that she regrets taking the easy option of finding accommodation through her Nigerian network as it had negative consequences.

Not only have these practical aspects been sought, but also the participants have acknowledged their need for emotional support and understanding. According to Lin (2001), expressive action motivates the individual to look for social contacts with similar characteristics, with whom they can share and who they can confide in, with the expected return of gaining their understanding and support. For example, Mazee and Meg have found research colleagues who they can share their difficulties with, Zinnia travels to a nearby city to spend time with co-national international students who can relate to her experience, Mani looks to the Egyptian society to find a social life for him and his wife and Ruhksana has found comfort in the Pakistani Muslim community where she finds values and cultural practices that she can relate to. Expressive actions can also be for practical gains, such as those which can be seen in the participants' maintenance of professional contacts back home. Although Leo does not have a large social group, he does keep close links with people from his very specific research area. He keeps in touch with them through Facebook as he is certain there will be research cooperation with them in the future. Jennifer does not have many examples of using her social capital to find work or accommodation, although she maintains her friendships with ex-colleagues in Turkey who offer a support network.

The study has found considerable evidence that international students, first and foremost, turn to social contacts for information about where to go and what to do in their free time. Even before their arrival in Britain, Meg and Jennifer had made co-national contacts based in Hilltown on Facebook and had many of their questions answered. The existence of country-based student societies, all of which also have Facebook pages, has been of huge benefit to the participants in one way or another. Zinnia and Ruhksana found employment through a contact they had met from the Burmese and Pakistani student societies respectively, Mani has met many contacts from the Egyptian society, Robbie, Zinnia and Leo have met people in the Chinese-British language and cultural exchange group, Robbie and Leo use Weibo as a valuable information source and Mazee has met other Nigerians, including her boyfriend, from the Nigerian student society. All of these social media platforms, societies and groups contain a vast amount of information about where to go and what to do in Hilltown and the nearby towns and cities, all being transmitted through (online and face-to-face) word-of-mouth.

Word-of-mouth information has also been found to have its drawbacks, as often the participants have been advised where *not* to go based on the negative experience of a social contact, or in some cases, following advice from an effective stranger via an online platform. The subjective advice from others is taken on board and has an effect on where the participants choose to spend their free time. Furthermore, as I pointed to a simple community noticeboard outside the library, many expressed an interest in joining the various community activities being advertised. These findings might serve as further cautionary tales to public places, community groups and universities and encourage them to collaborate in offering neutral signposting to local events and activities. The participants in this study want to explore the local area, and would seemingly embrace local (off-campus) integration activities if only they knew how.

9.5. Contribution and implications for future research and practice

As previously mentioned, the existence of recurrent themes in qualitative research can carry suggestions as to what may be applicable to other situations (Yin, 2018). The present study has revealed some collective themes in the experiences of the participants and therefore common implications that might be transferred across to other groups of international students in the UK and internationally. Thick description and lengthy quotes have been used throughout Chapters Five to Eight, and it is hoped that the reader is able to evaluate the findings in the context of their own work with international students (Smith et al., 2009, Yin, 2018). This final section will summarise the contribution of this study, and by doing so will discuss its implications for future research and practice.

A consistent thread that weaves throughout the participants' stories is that of their personal development. All of them, at some point during the interviews, acknowledge their student sojourn as a journey that has enabled them to learn about themselves and, to reiterate a quote from Logan, to *see things in a different light*. Yet the study also reveals a sense of missed opportunity. The participants for one reason or another have missed opportunities to meet local people. Local people or home students have missed opportunities to diversify their friendship groups. The university has potentially missed opportunities to address issues of intolerance, by celebrating the food and dance of different countries and possibly further entrenching the divide between 'international' and 'home' students. Local retail and café businesses have missed opportunities to diversify their customer base, and as a result the local community has missed opportunities to embrace the diversity advantage of having international students. The local council has also missed opportunities to include international students in community-building activities and community cohesion projects.

Integration is a very localised issue. Community groups and grass roots initiatives are specific to the needs of the local area and its local ethnic minority community populations. The stories of Ruhksana's and Abdo's integration are very significant because they are placed at the nexus between both the Pakistani / Kurdish and the international student communities. International students such as Ruhksana and Abdo could be seen as gatekeepers to ethnic minority communities such as theirs. Hilltown has a large part to play in the study's findings and a larger-scale study that looks at the integration experiences of international students who are studying in a town or city with large co-national ethnic minority communities might go some way in further illuminating the findings presented here. In terms of utilising international students as 'community connectors' or as it is termed it here, 'intercultural agents', a pilot project could be organised whereby a team of international students is involved in local community cohesion projects to see if this might be beneficial. The Community Cohesion Manager for Hilltown was certainly interested in this idea and has taken steps to contact the university regarding potential collaborations. Caution ought to be taken however, to ensure that generalisations are not made. As we have seen in the case of Jennifer, not all international students wish to associate with co-national settled communities. Furthermore, Logan's solitude arises from his subjective preferences, and not his un-willingness to integrate. Although he takes part in volunteer work, he may not welcome the idea of becoming an intercultural agent.

The importance of universities working with their local government therefore, cannot be emphasised enough. There is an important focus in the literature on the benefits that universities can gain from the presence of international students on campus (Knight, 2004; Leask, 2009; HEA, 2015). On the flipside, this study highlights that the UK is 'not a monolithic whole' (Parekh, 2006, p.105) in the eyes of the participants, and that international students can likewise gain benefits from living in the wider, diverse, host

community. This must be explored further and the study's findings imply that joined-up thinking between those working in the local government and in higher education, will directly help international students to integrate, thus maximising the potential benefits of living in a multicultural town such as Hilltown.

The absence of collaboration is further highlighted in the recent Integrated Communities Strategy green paper, which proposes to 'provide a package of practical information for recent migrants in our integration areas to better help them understand and navigate British life, values and culture' (MHCLG, 2018). Many of those working in universities with international students, like myself, have likely been tasked with creating similar 'packages' to help international students adapt to their new academic environment. It seems obvious that a collaborative approach between academic and local government staff would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of *all* recent migrants. This study shows that we ought to recognise international students as being as much a part of our wider communities as they are our university campuses.

As is often the case with small-scale qualitative studies such as this, many questions have been flagged up which could form the basis of further enquiry. As stated earlier, Hilltown is approximately 80% White British. When researching and writing about integration, the notion of 'host' inevitably arises, and this study urges researchers to question and define what they mean by 'host'. In previous studies of this nature (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Brown, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Dunne, 2009; Leask, 2009; Brown and Richards, 2012; Arambewela and Hall, 2013; Brown and Jones, 2013; Campbell, 2011; Bethel, Szabo and Ward, 2016) such definition remains strikingly absent. An exploratory survey could be conducted for international students to clarify who they consider the 'host' to be. This

would have implications for future studies on the social experiences of international students as the host/international binary would need to be examined and defined.

There is an eleventh story present in the study, which opens up another avenue for further research. Mani's account of his wife's isolation is quite distressing and highlights the importance of support for the spouses of international students. Although Mani is the only participant in this study whose spouse accompanied him to the UK, his account suggests that this is a widespread issue that *happened to all of my friends wives or husbands, fed up with sitting at home without any work*. It is an under-researched issue in the UK context, perhaps owing to the difficulty in gaining access to spouses as a participant group. Whilst there are often university-led interventions to foster the integration of international students, Mani's experience suggests that there is little done to extend this welcome to their spouses and children, and this must be acknowledged and addressed.

Finally, although the long-standing debate as to whether or not international students should be classified and counted as migrants is not the focus of the present study, whilst they are labelled as migrants, they ought to be given due consideration in debates about integration. The attention they are given ought to stretch further than just a numbers game and include the recognition of the needs and desires of international students in terms of micro-level integration. The present study was completed during the time of the UK's departure from the EU. It is now more crucial than ever to create a welcome social environment for international students, and to integrate an understanding of their needs with those of the wider migrant community. The present study makes a contribution to knowledge by placing the experiences of a case-study group of international students within the discourses of integration. By doing so it opens up important avenues for further research and conversation. Hence I anticipate that this study will be a timely addition to the

larger bodies of research already concerned with understanding and enhancing both the migrant and international student experience in the UK.

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APPENDIX 1: Analytical Framework

International students: A framework for integration

Interactions & Participation

Micro-level integration can be analysed by examining the interactions and participation of the individual.

Structural factors

- Ethnic diversity in the local area
- Opportunity to re-create social practices
- Experiences of discrimination
- Opportunity for intercultural contact
- University interventions.

Individual factors

- Observations about British ways of being and doing
- Interactions with local people
- Ways of observing local culture
- Sense of belonging

Social capital building & mobilisation

- Ways of building
- Reinforce identity
- Emotional support
- Exert influence
- Flow of information

APPENDIX 2: Pilot interview guide

Interview guide

In preparation for the interview, please think about these things:

1. Think about the concept of 'integration'

The UK government has done a lot of research about how much people are 'integrated' in the UK.

Two researchers, named Ager and Strang, suggest that measuring 'integration' involves a combination of various things, such as:

- Your interaction and contact with people who are different to you – e.g. by ethnicity, by gender, by age.
- Access to employment or volunteering opportunities – e.g. using your skills in the UK.
- Your accommodation – if you feel safe, if you feel informed about accommodation issues.
- Access to education – if you have the opportunity to learn about things that are important to you.
- Access to health care – if you feel informed about the services that are available to you. If you know what to do if you become ill.

In the interview, I will ask you:

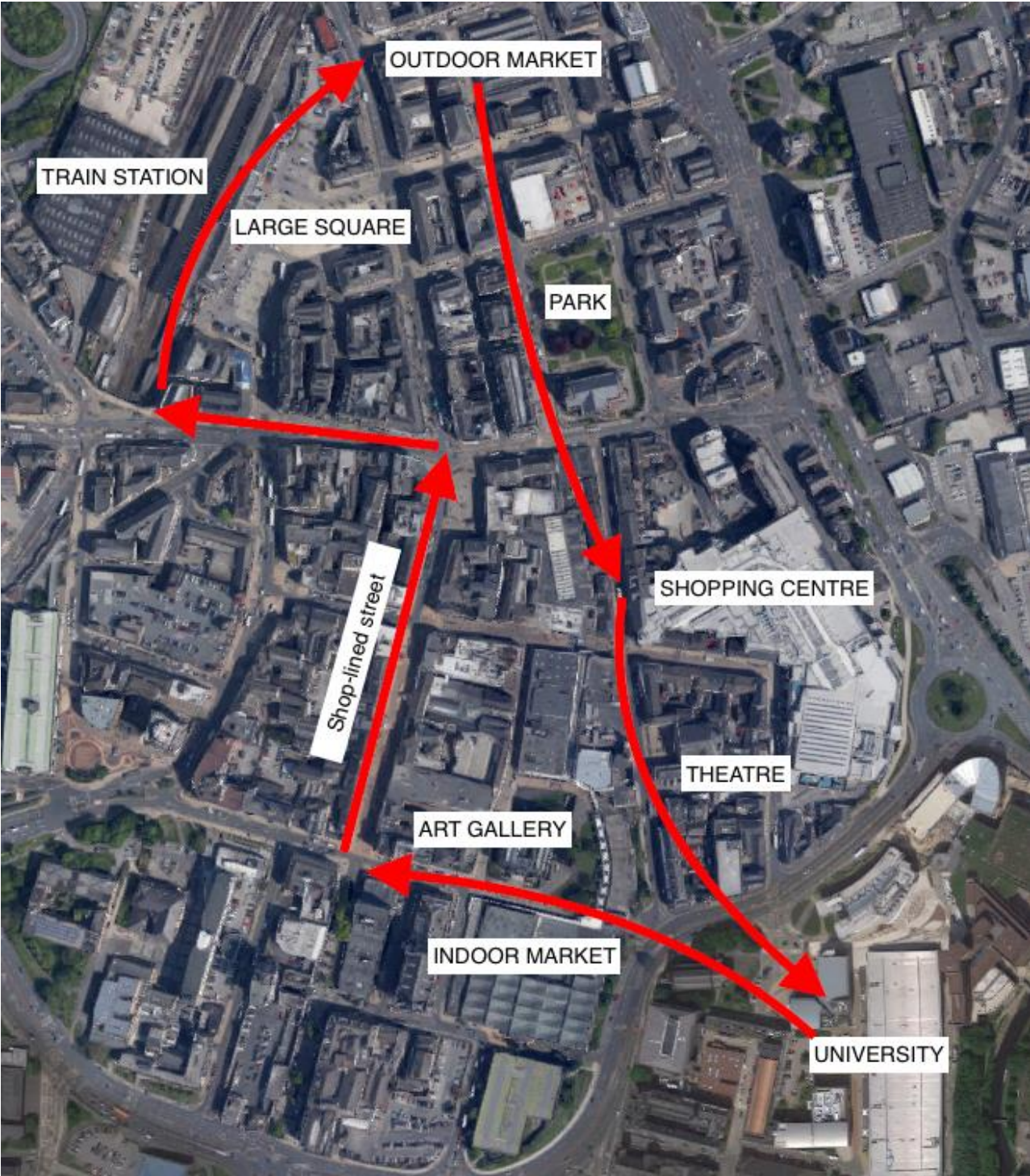
- a. What do you think about the concept of integration?
- b. How 'integrated' do you feel, according to the government's suggestions above?
- c. How important is your integration in the UK?
- d. How much do you feel 'at home' in the UK?
- e. Have you had any help integrating, for example meeting new people or learning about UK culture?
- f. Who or what helped you?
- g. How did you feel about this help?

2. Your social life

We will look at the social maps we made last week, and I will ask you about the following things:

- a. When you first arrived in the UK, how did you meet people?
- b. Tell me about your friends
- c. (referring to the 'map') Looking at the people who are 'important', what activities do you do together?
- d. Where do you go to socialise?
- e. Can you show me any photos of social things you've done since you've been in the UK?
- f. If you have a personal problem, who do you talk to?

APPENDIX 3: Map of walking interview



APPENDIX 4: Example of transcript under analysis

'Ruhksana'

Aged 32

Female from Pakistan.

PhD 4th final year in the business school.

In UK since December 2012

Significant statements

Researcher's interpretation and musings

Theme

Highlighted text – to probe in next interview

Interview 1

[During network mapping activity]:

R

Do I need to write the family as well?

J

Have you got a big family?

R

It is, but there are a few... like, I talk daily with my brother and there are, like, a few cousins who I do contact but not that frequently, like I do contact once a week. Definitely once a week... Do I write them as well?

J

Yeah, please.

R

It's tricky for me! [laughs] Like... daily I do ... **I have to talk to my mum daily... err, she was in Pakistan before but now she is in America so...yeah that's my mum and dad. I daily have to tell her that I have eaten [laughs]** All mums are same actually! **Parents are in the USA - Does this mean that it is 'normal' to move from Pakistan?**

J

Okay so, whilst I am putting these on the map, these next friends are you're your country, and from university... that you met because you are a student here... people that you consider that you know them well enough to have a conversation with.

R

Okay... well I had a friend in my first year. We used to talk daily... like we used to walk back from university to our accommodation, daily, but she has completed her PhD so she had left ... it's been more than a year she's back ... erm...

J

Okay, are you still in contact with her in any way?

R

Yeah we are on social media... on facebook.. but now our contact is not that frequent. It might take months, like three four months.

J

Okay we can write her down and then talk about her in more detail later on...

R

Yeah cos I think in relevance of your study, my contact with her would be one of the key contacts actually. And another contact it...she is still here in Hilltown but she had completed her PhD so she is no more in the university but she is still here. **Why was this contact so important for R ?**

J

But you met here here? They she would be another.

R

Err... another friend of mine, she is from Pakistan but she is not at university but she is in Hilltown

J

Yeah she would be in a different category... We have another category for her.

R

Okay and another friend of mine... who is also at the Business School doing PhD with me, err.. her parents are from Pakistan. She born here, lived all her life here. Here R is unsure which category to place this friend in, she sees her as a Pakistani co-national from uni, but I suggest that she is a UK person from uni. Does this mean that to R , somebody doesn't need to be born in Pakistan to be Pakistani?

J

Okay, so maybe she is a British Pakistani?

R

Yeah

J

Okay then we would put her in a different category.

R

Okay! [laughs] Oh.. and my supervisor is also from Pakistani background! He is from Pakistan, so do I write his name as well?

J

Okay, yeah, is that a coincidence?

R

Yeah. Actually my second supervisor... err he left the uni, he joined somewhere else. At that time I was in my second year, near to completion of my second year and during that period he joined, and he took up my second supervisor position.

J

Right!

R

Okay... who else... oh yes there is somebody but he's gone somewhere. He's on that... marriage leave? And I am not having contact with him... it's been one month...

J

Okay – but you will see him again when he returns?

R

Yes when he will be back... yeah okay I think that is all.

J

Thank you – so this now is for people who you know because you met them in England but they are not from the university. So they are friends from outside. From any country as long as you met them in England but not through university.

R

Okay. I was thinking that I am an unsocial person but this is making me.. yeah!

I could get them down as groups actually...like I am doing voluntary work actually and I have had other works previously so those groups...those communities? Here R seems surprised that she has so many social ties. She also mentions that she is involved in different 'communities' through her paid and voluntary work in the UK. She doesn't single out any individuals from the Madrassa group or the Pakistani student society. She does single out an individual from the workplace – 'Yasmin'.

J

Yeah – we can write them as groups, but if there are individuals who you feel are specifically close then we will name them as individual friends too.

R

Okay... so yeah we have the Pakistan society of university.

J

A Pakistani student society?

R

Yeah...

J

Okay great. The next category is British people who you met because you are a student here... maybe students or staff or...

R

Okay so like the administrator, my main supervisor, yeah, the research group... erm... no I'll write their names here. One of the PGR administrator... her parents are from Pakistan so I am also having a frequent friendly contact with her as well.

J

So was she born in England?

R

Yes

J

Then we would put her in the home student category

R

Write her here? But here I am writing British people... so she is British? Again R is confused about which category this person belongs in – born in UK, parents from Pakistan.

J

Well a lot of people who were from Pakistan.. they classify themselves as British if they were born here and lived here all their lives...

R

Okay... Erm I have another contact, but its been like 3-4 months I am not in that much contact with him? But that was one of the significant contact during my first two years.

J

Okay, yeah. Thank you.

R

I like this map! It is good, how did you make them?

J

This is a piece of software, called Vennmaker, from Germany, and you can make a map and , so this is you in the middle and then you can drag your friends closer and decide if they know each other... it's nice! So this final group is for international staff or students, we call it a multinational network – you met them here at university but they are form different counties.

R

Okay... erm I am not that frequent with any one of them actually. Yeah, well sitting in the office, sometimes we do have a conversation. I believe I am quite... the most quiet person out of them, but sometime the discussion at the back, it gets interesting... Sometimes I jump in... so yeah, sometimes we do have a discussion in the kitchen, little bit like, erm, yeah, so a few colleagues...

But that really depends on the person's type. If they are friendly... like a few people they really make me talk, like, to me like 'Hello I'm here!' [laughs] and the other part, sometimes, even these persons I just walk across, I won't say hello, it's cos I don't.. erm... I'm not of that open kind of person. R doesn't place any of her university contacts in the central circle. She separates her professional (PhD) life from her personal life. Her personal social life is situated outside of the university context.

J

Okay, but if a person approaches you?

R

Then I do respond [sounds surprised] I give a response, but sometimes limited, sometimes it depends, it varies... so I have a few names here as well...

J

Okay just give me a minute to put these on the map...and then I will ask you some more questions about these people... but there are a lot of people so we will try and do this within our hour [laughs]

R

[laughing] okay! I was thinking I am a lonely person... I am the most alone person in this world! [laughs] but so many people around me! [laughing] Again she says she thinks she is lonely and is surprised by how many contacts are on this map.

J

Yeah it is quite interesting when you start doing it.

R

Could you share this [map] with me please? And send me the name of software as well?

J

Yeah sure I'll take a screen shot and send it.

R

Yeah it sounds interesting, I could also use that in my research... I was just transcribing an interview today and it was really interesting one. I got myself really involved in that interview.

J

Okay... Now we need to grade these people according to how close they are to you.

R

How we gonna say the closest and less close?

J

Well imagine your parents would be here?

R

Actually all these four gonna come here.. and these... that is my closest cousin who share all my secrets and my friend who knows almost all of my secrets.

[Mapping / grading not transcribed – see field notes]

R

There could be more friends here, actually, I do have a friends group here as well.. my school friends group. Actually they are a whatsapp group and daily there is along list of messages and I can't resist! [laughs] and out of them, like two are quite close friends... you can put a cousins group as well, that's again like a Whatsapp group and among my cousins, that generation, I am the oldest one and they all are like younger siblings, so they always being like naughty kind of stuff and I'm always, like, as being eldest sister 'don't do that!' Because these are Whatsapp groups, R can maintain her involvement with her friends and family from wherever she is. Is this an example of a transnational social space?

R

Here actually. It might disturb your research... but here we could place few other with who I don't have contact but I do have contact... kind of like, we don't talk directly but we keep eye on each other [laughs] that's strange!

J

Okay is it just one person?

R

Two

J

Okay and how do you want me to call them?

R

Just write friend one and friend two [laughing].. actually I missed my elder brother and two nephews... so if we add a new group of 'immediate family' my brother, his wife and my nephew of one month old! I dearly want to see a new pic of him! [laughs]

[more mapping / grading – see field notes]

J

Okay so I'm gonna ask you the kinds of activities you do with these people and how you met. Let's start with these people who you know from outside of university. Tell me how you met Yasmin?

R

I had a work somewhere...if you know that media centre in town? I had a job there and but in media centre there are many many companies working in that one building, it's a building actually and she was in the adjacent company, like company I was working with that room was here and the front door room was... she works there, and at that time actually she was the only Muslim lady wearing headscarf there and it was like my **first or second day, my colleague introduced me that there was another Muslim lady who is also sharing a Pakistani background. The idea of shared background as a way to meet people.** She born here but her parents again from Pakistan and she been to Pakistan for a long duration as well she's .. she lived there for 6 years. She's familiar with the language as well. **The first thing, first for me is my prayers, so wherever I'm being there. Because I was working, I spent the whole day there, it was my prayer time so I wanted to know about the prayer direction and the place where I can pray so I just went to her to ask that thing. R introduces me to the importance of her prayers. She says her prayers are the first thing, and she feels preoccupied until she can find somewhere to pray.**

Theme: Important role of religion

So yeah, that was the first interaction, and after that first interaction, the second interaction was that I asked her that I'm looking for accommodation and I moved with her and its been two years I'm living with her! [laughing] She has found a person to live with, who shares some of the most important things to her: religion, Pakistani background, some language. I wonder which language they speak together?

J

Ah really! What a great story!

R

It's really interesting that I have a really nice kind of relationship with her. Now we are close friends who share secrets. We tell each other everything and we both are like kind of mums and siblings as well. If she'll not eat I'll pinch her and if I miss my meal she's again after me [laughing] Y now represents a close friend and sister – they look out for each other as family would do. Would this be possible if they didn't share the Pakistani background? Food also seems important. Her mum calls her to check she has eaten and now Y checks up on her eating too.

J

That's lovely so you live together for two years, okay, and what kind of activities do you do together outside of your accommodation? Do you go places together?

R

Yeah I do visit her all family – she has a big family, all lives in the Hilltown most of them yeah, like on the same street and on the next street, she have her two sisters families, three brothers families, no actually five brothers and their families and even their families means their kids are also having their

own families and they all have their houses in the street down there and the next street there... [laughing] and she takes me everywhere along with her. My intent for this question was to find out which places R goes to when she is not in university. Her response suggests that she mainly socialises within the home – her own home and the homes of Y's family.

J

Wow so that's a real sense of community then?

R

It is. It is.

J

Can I ask where you live?

R

T.L. My immediate thought is that there is a large community in T.L., and that is a run down area. – you go up the back route of the university – 25 minutes walk to the house.

J

Lovely. So you do things with her family, okay.

R

Like... I usually very frequently visit her sister's home so I do spend time with them even if she's away somewhere, her sisters call me so I'm like enjoying the same kind of family most of the time. A large part of her social life is with the Pakistani community.

J

Yeah, and so do you go to any restaurants or for coffee or...?

R

We do but occasionally. We are not into that stuff. And we don't go for the expensive things actually! So yeah but sometimes like, I had my first year progressions I took them for a meal, and they had like... her husband had a payrise so they took us on a meal, so... something happens, something good, we do... sometimes we have been to shopping as well. I was not that aware of where to buy things and that so she have given me a good guidance as well. Like okay you can go there... go there ... yeah definitely. You know different happenings at family, if somebody die or such that. We do share all those things as well. Social outings to public restaurants are reserved for special occasions and with her 'UK adopted family'.

Theme: UK adopted family.

J

Okay, thank you – and tell me about N and family – how you met?

R

Again I have story behind it! Erm it was approximately the same time period when I met Y and then I met N yeah it was exactly the same month when I met both of them. I was new here it was only two or three months I've been here in Hilltown, yeah not more than 4 / 5 months. I was searching for accommodation and I was quite worried about that stuff I was looking for some room and I was bit disturbed as well at that time. So I was walking down to university from my accommodation where I was living at that time. And I was like in my mind it was that thoughts like I need to find accommodation, how to find? And that was a big question like, how to find? So I saw a lady going in front of me. She was wearing the Pakistani dress. Erm... I don't know what happened to me, it just clicked to my mind that 'go somewhere and ask that lady - she might give you some clue of where to go!' and, err, she was like quite at a distant from me. I was on one edge of the road and she was on the other. She was waking quite fast as well. I just run after her [laugh] and I stopped her and I started 'excuse me, are you from Pakistan I'm from Pakistan as well. I'm looking for accommodation, I'm really depressed at the moment' and she looked at me like this and she said 'well okay calm down sister, don't worry, okay where are you from?' and she asked me some questions and she said okay I have a spare room at my house and if you want you can visit me, you can come. R spotted a woman because by looking at her she could see that they share a Pakistani background – why is this? Why did she choose to ask a stranger for help instead of looking for official sources of help in the UK? Maybe not a stranger because of the background. Also, 'calm down sister' – being in the presence of a 'sister' made her feel 'calm' – maybe this familiarity made her feel more secure?? She mentions this calming influence again later on when she speaks of meeting F.

Theme: Shared background brings a calming effect

She gave me her address and contact number. I had some... some work at university at that time and I was really... I need to be in university so I made a commitment with her that I would come at some specified time to see her house and whatever. So yeah that was my first contact and after that was again like, such, erm, such a strong relationship that many times she's actually leave her kids with me and actually what happens in that relationship is ... she had a very very major accident and at that time because she's also no having no other relationships here. She came here for like, her husband is having a job here so they came UK to join that job and they don't know much people around here as well so they were

alone as well. So at that accident time, I was like the only one who know them and they were in kind of a situation so I don't know, I don't know but it was like... I had to take care of the kids and all that, so, yeah. That's what happened. R becomes important social capital to N and family – She helps look after the children and she was there for them in a time of need when they had nobody else.

J

And she still lives here? You're still in touch?

R

Yeah she still lives here. She's absolutely fine with her health now but the thing is that her kids are so attached to me now. And the thing is I am also not having the family here so.. she always cooks for me, she always bring different for me – have you eaten or not... its' like most of my thing comes from food! [laughing] Food again – her adopted family caring about her eating properly.

J

Okay and what about this 'Madrassa' group?

R

It's basically teaching. It's volunteer teaching group, and its teaching of ... erm... basically I don't know how much you are aware of I'm a Muslim and Muslims have their specific prayers, their teachings, err we do have a holy book Q'ran so its kind of a Q'ran teaching you know, to little kids, we start like erm from the very young age, we start teaching them how to pray, how to read Q'ran so that's a group of ladies same like me. Those all are from Hilltown they born here, but yeah like they do have their parents or grandparents were from Pakistan so yeah, but it's a group of - like, if you know that Masjid Mosque, where Muslim pray, like in the faith centre we have a prayer room. Muslims have a prayer room, like we always have a prayer place, like that is called a masjid so there we teach our kids like how to read our holy book and how to pray. Masjid is the specific word we use that means place for prayer. We always prefer to say a masjid that's the right word for it, mosque is not academically the right word.

J

Interesting – okay... So we're gonna go through the other closer friends. So F, how did you meet?

R

[laughing] again I think the three contacts in the closest circle are related to accommodation and food! Food and shelter – classic Maslow! So F I met her on the very first day I came to university and on the very first day again I was looking for accommodation [laughs] and err, yeah I was a bit confused as to the best new place, don't know where to go, where the road gonna take me and all that stuff so that was the first day and that was actually went bit disturbing due to certain issues. I did manage to reach Hilltown, at that time I was at Oldham I did manage to take my bus I reached here, then from the bus stop I managed to reach university, it was a bit scary as well and at university where I had to go for registration, from where do I need to start, all that stuff. Many things went wrong in that. Erm, like first I spend my time with the wrong group. It was like a registration for the foundation year courses and I was the PhD candidate so I don't know why they made me sit there for long hours. They made me fill all the form and at the end said 'oh you are not in this course, you need to go somewhere else' so such all that stuff happened. Then I went to another place, right place, but then they said we are having a long queue so we can't take you in today, you have to come again and I was like 'what??' it was my first day and it was really horrible. It was really horrible.

J

Was that at the international office?

R

Yeah at that time, it was the building in the corner, the international registration office was different, so that was a different kind of stuff. So in all that things, my phone never worked that day, the internet in my house not working, I was not able to contact anybody. But anyhow at the end of day I did manage to find the faith centre where I could pray [laughs] so I just went for my prayer. Again preoccupied with needing to pray when she was having an awful day. When I was just entering the faith centre I saw a lady that look like, like having the same looks like of a Pakistani or an Indian... Pakistani and Indian have both same, like, same features or skin colour. So I was really disturbed and I was nervous and confused as well, so I just said a hello to her and on saying hello, my tears were here! I was literally crying and I was not even able to say the one word. So she was really, like emotionally clever. She make me sit, she gave me water, she made me calm down. Like okay, take deep breaths, take a few minutes' she start speaking in my language, I felt comfortable, it took me like a few minutes then, okay she speaking my language, she gave her introduction like okay, she is from Pakistan and wherever she is from and she is doing all that and then she asked me 'okay now tell me why you crying, what happened?' so then I shared with her that its my first day and I'm looking for accommodation and that's what happened to me, again the calming effect of shared background and that I wasn't even able to do the registration. I was thinking I was late and they not getting me registered then what happened here where gonna be if its not registered?

J

So where were you living at that time?

R

I was at O. but it was kind of stuck, erm, I was not even, that was the first time I travelled in bus, I travelled in bus in UK. Even in my country I was not used to travel in bus, because in my country it's a different transport system and yeah it is. In fact in those two trips. I lived in O. for one week only one week, and I travelled from O. to Hilltown only twice I think so, and I [got] lost four times! I knew... they told me which number bus I need to take but every time what gonna happen is... the same number bus goes that way and that way... and I took the other way! [laughs] Then I board off on the wrong stop. I knew they told me like after three four stops you need to board off but something went wrong and it was scary dark like, it was December, you know even at 5 o'clock it's really dark and for me, I'm really afraid of dark. We don't go out often like when it gets dark we only go out in the daytime. So it was really scary for me. I do have my maps with me and all that stuff but everything was going wrong! [laughs] **Describes confusion using the bus for the first time, and being uncomfortable about being out after dark. Is this culture shock?**

J

Wow that's a really awful story

R

It is! Well it's interesting, now it's interesting.

J

Now you can look back and think...

R

But after that with F, it was like, erm, so she arranged for my accommodation in two days, she took my phone number, she called me every time back, she kept like each and everything of me, okay she sorted my accommodation in one or two days. then she told me 'okay what are you doing for food' and again I was like 'I'm doing nothing!' so she took me to Tesco, told me okay 'you can take these things' and erm, if you know Muslims only eat halal food so we need to find food as well, we just can't take anything from the shelves, so yeah, that stuff and the university stuff, she guide me each and every step of the university, like 'okay you need to go there you need to do that, you need to go library, you need all that stuff' and from there our friendship like had a start, then our accommodation was near so every day we used to walk together from university, then she take me to her home, she cooks and I eat! [laughs] and she help me definitely like with the admission to university and accommodation difficulties with my coursework and all that. She was in third year of PhD at that time, so all the frustration and difficulties with PhD. Like okay I do have a proposal but what's going on? Where do I need to work further? So...yeah. **Very useful bridging capital – helps to find accommodation, helped with university systems, helped with finding halal food.**

J

Okay so tell me about A and these...

R

Okay so these two both are sisters, and I don't share secrets with them but they are really close with me, we do care, they really care about me. Actually A was F's friend. A's also PhD from here, A had completed her PhD and R is still in her third year of PhD. Both are in computing, and F was in English, like languages. So actually we have become a group and there are a few others, we can add here as well. [adding two more to the map] She is a PhD student in Journalism.

J

Okay tell me more about these international students friends?

R

She is at the business school – we are approximately at the same stage and, erm, yeah, what else about her? Actually... with her... she's in law department and I'm in operations management department. Not much related in terms of our research, it's different but we came to know each other for, like, we both actively look for some work. So she was not into that stuff, but something happened that she started looking for work, like her partner and her situation. **She had some, like, she is from Iraq, Kurdistan Iraq so her pay stopped, where she is getting money from her country back so she started looking for work. That was the first time and she came to me, that you are working so you can guide me for some part time work or that stuff. So yeah from there we started and we came to know, okay she has a problem and whatever work I had done or was doing, I shared all my experience with her like where she can go, how she can collect information, what else can she do. R has become a useful contact for others, as she can use her own experience to help others who are in need.**

Theme: Becomes useful contact for others

In the same respect, we did a survey together, we did one job together so, yeah, on that day actually we spent the whole day doing the job together and on that day we came to know each other more and from that day we have become more friendly, we have come to know the common things among us and the different things we can learn... like I am always interested in learning Arabic, she speaks Arabic, so she started telling me a few words and felt interested in that and, err, yeah she's also like interested in being more frequent in English, she thinks I am better in English, she doesn't know how worst I am! [laughs] yeah and same, we both are looking for some work so that's the common reason of that. Then after that there are two three,

actually in business school there are more number of males I think, If I am not wrong - I could be - yeah so there are only three four girls that are similar, a bit similar, so we started making a group, we have been to dinner once, we tried to do a gathering on our Eid festival, so yeah, that's it.... **These are all in the office. Sometimes when I get stuck with my computer or like research stuff, I just call ... like he knows everything about that stuff, because like you know that person he's also doing interviews so he knows I've done interviews and I'm doing transcriptions, sometimes we do have discussion about that. He is fond of Pakistani food biryani. He always ask me to cook biryani for him! [laughs] I still have never made biryani for him. And he's actually the most famous person in our office – if ever need some helps ask K – he's a computer mechanic, a printer mechanic, he sort everything out! Even if you are hungry his locker is always full of biscuits and chocolate he always offers you! [laughing] he's a very kind man he always offers me food. R leans on her research office colleagues to help her with things.**

J

Okay, great, I think we can leave this there because I know you want to go and pray... you have told me a lot....

R

I think if we look at each person there is a different story, like with my supervisor the relationship is different...

R

It's very interesting to see so many people around me! Sometimes I feel so lonely literally, I feel so lonely and that number of people around me! Again mentions the loneliness, and surprise that she isn't as lonely as she thought.

Theme: Feeling alone compared to life in home country

APPENDIX 5: Individual participant summaries and insights

Meg

Meg is very engaged with her PhD, and puts a lot of pressure on herself to be recognised. Meg is a naturally outgoing, chatty and social person and describes her dedication to the PhD as a 'sacrifice' as she is putting any social life on hold until it is completed. She spends her free time in the gym or in small social groups, going shopping and going for lunch, dinner or coffee in the internationally-branded places in Hilltown. Before she arrived in the UK, Meg made friends with other co-national students via social media. She sees many of these friendships as quite functional, rather than meaningful. She shares a house with her best friend who is Polish, and who has introduced her to a large circle of other Polish migrants. For Meg these people are from the 'host' community, and it is important to note that these friends are themselves what the policy discourse labels 'economic migrants'. They are mainly Polish, they have found work and settled in the UK and are therefore seen as 'host' friendships through Meg's eyes. On first impressions, Meg seems the most settled in Hilltown. She speaks perfect English, she lives with good friends, she has a job and workmates who she gets on well with, and she is familiar with many bars and restaurants in the town. Yet when we look more deeply at her story, we see that she speaks English so well because she has worked in tourist resorts in Bulgaria, her housemates are all international students, her friends are economic migrants and the bars and restaurants she chooses to frequent are those most similar to the ones she would find in Bulgaria. Her place of work is also one of an international chain, and her camaraderie with her 'British' workmates seems mostly of an intercultural nature as they are interested in understanding her 'otherness'. Meg's 'otherness' is also highlighted in her very negative experience of living with English people, which has no doubt left a lasting impression as she understandably interpreted their hostility as a reaction to her being a *foreigner*.

Ruhksana

Ruhksana finds comfort in the presence of other Pakistani Muslim women, or 'sisters' and speaks about the calming effect this has on her. Ruhksana takes part in plenty of university-organised events, and is very social with those she meets at such events, but does not tend to socialise outside of the university campus. Ruhksana separates her professional (PhD) life from her personal life. Her personal social life is situated outside of the university context, but this is her choice. It was very important to Ruhksana to live in a house with other Muslims so that she could have the facilities to enable her to pray in comfort, and she even ran across a road to seek help from a stranger dressed in traditional Pakistani clothes. She has found a best friend and an adopted family who share culture, values and food. Her best friend is a British-Pakistani, who Ruhksana sees as both co-national and local or 'host'. Ruhksana feels the need to 'give back' to society. She is involved with the Muslim community, demonstrated by her volunteering at a local madrassa teaching group. Ruhksana also has a deep sense of duty to her family in Pakistan, as it is a part of her culture to be involved closely with the family network. Because of her Whatsapp groups, Ruhksana can maintain her involvement with her friends and family from wherever she is. Having said that, she also complains that she is feeling pressure from her family to finish her PhD quickly and return home, at one time she mentions the pressure to get married and later she suggests her parents health issues require her to return and help look after them. There are aspects of British life that Ruhksana finds upsetting or frustrating. The seemingly ever-presence of alcohol sees her avoiding places such as the theatre, and she deliberately avoids any independent café in case it does not serve suitable food. Even on the university campus, she never seems to know which food she can eat at academic events as it is not clearly labelled as halal and she has been asked not to pray in her research office. She also sometimes a general feeling of being judged as 'Other'. These things play out as everyday barriers to her

participation, and in turn she is driven more to stay within the aforementioned community life where she finds comfort and belonging. In a last-minute bid to experience British culture, Ruhksana wishes to visit some tourist places before her visa expires.

Robbie

Robbie began his studies as an undergraduate and is very intent that he would like to stay and work as an architect in the UK after his PhD. He has a great sense of loyalty to Britain and has developed an understanding of many features of the British culture such as tennis, art and theatre. Having said that, there are aspects that he still does not feel that he understands such as the British sense of humour and cultural nuances such as politeness. He expresses a wish to continue meeting local people so that he can learn from them, and he tries to travel as much as possible to broaden his social network. Robbie gives a few examples of feeling unwelcome by fellow students when he first arrived and of overt racism in the street near where he lives and on the train. These instances have been met by him with a certain resilience as he strives to protect the reputation of Britain amongst his co-national friends and the potential future Chinese international students that he is in contact with. Many of Robbie's existing social contacts are based in London and are other Chinese international students. He also spends a lot of time visiting his friends who spread around different countries. Robbie also has a best friend who is British, who he met whilst doing his Master's. They meet regularly for coffee, lunch or on special occasions such as new year's eve in a nearby city and this has allowed Robbie to meet others from outside of the academic community. He met his other social contacts from university in the same way as Meg and Ruhksana; during the professional development sessions organised by the central research department. He also goes to food parties where he socialises with a multi-national friendship group. Robbie, like others, compares life in the UK with his life in China before he arrived. Although he enjoys going to cafés, bars and restaurants in Hilltown and nearby cities, he misses the busy evening street life and often struggles to find anything to

do in the evenings. He sometimes attends the British-Chinese cultural exchange group on Saturdays and has himself become a useful contact for others who are either newly-arrived in Hilltown or are considering studying there. To find out local information and to discover what events are happening in nearby cities, Robbie usually turns to the online community of previous Chinese international students as the first port of call.

Abdo

Abdo is under pressure to complete his PhD on time so that he can return to Iraq and continue working in his job at a university. Despite the amount of work he is currently doing for his PhD, Abdo describes what he loves about the UK with great enthusiasm. He loves the multi-cultural nature of Hilltown, the shops and the orderliness of its systems. Abdo does not speak perfect English, but he acknowledges this and one of the reasons he wishes to meet English people is to practice speaking English, rather than spending all day speaking Arabic as they do in his research office. He also shows a real desire to learn the history and culture of everyday things in Britain and he thinks that meeting British people would be the best way to learn. Abdo is a chatty and sociable person who wishes to learn about the UK and is disappointed by the lack of opportunity to interact with local people, either in university, or in the wider society. Nonetheless, Abdo has a large social group mostly because he shares a busy research office with many other, mostly Arabic-speaking, male international students. Abdo is Muslim, but he does not mention his religion during the interviews. Rather, he mentions often that he has found comfort and support from the settled Kurdish community in the suburbs of Hilltown. Many Kurdish people helped him when he arrived in Hilltown and he in turn has become an important social contact for those who are newly-arrived. The only negative things Abdo has to say are when he recounts a visit to the dentist where he had a very bad experience and that the shops close too early. Nonetheless, he has managed in part to recreate his former social practices in Hilltown. He goes for coffee in a local Costa, he visits a Kurdish barber

and invites friends over to his house regularly to share food. He also visits Kurdish restaurants recommended by friends and has made friends with the owners of his local restaurant.

Jennifer

Jennifer speaks a lot about the changing political situation in Turkey, which has led to her exploring her options for a different country to live and work in after her PhD. Yet despite her apparent disconnect from Turkey, Jennifer still waits for a visit back home to go to the hairdressers and she enjoys visiting familiar cafés and shops in the UK that she has visited in Turkey, such as Costa, Accessorize and M&S. Jennifer has always been influenced by 'Western' culture and has had a 'transnational' life, from going to an international school to working in a multi-national company, so it is not unusual for Jennifer to be around people from various countries. Like others, Jennifer turned to social media to get to know some people prior to arriving in the UK and has a small network of other Turkish international students in different parts of the country. Unlike Ruhksana and Abdo however, she is not interested in making contact with settled Turkish people in Britain as she thinks the social divide would be too great. Having said that, she complains about the lack of Turkish people in Hilltown and says that she would feel less lonely if there were more Turkish PhD students, to develop more of a support network and a better social life. Jennifer has a love for British literature and culture. She loves museums and Shakespeare, and out of all the participants she enjoys going to the pub most frequently. She embraces the liberal, non-judgemental, secular way of life in Britain and laments the lack of democracy she sees in her home country. She is very reflective and sees her experience in Britain as a journey of personal development, learning about how she wants to be. One conclusion that she has drawn seems to be a certain discord with overtly Islamic practices such as the necessity of eating halal food and women 'wearing the headscarf'. This perhaps stems from her

upbringing in a secular city in a predominantly Muslim country as she explains that she has always received a certain kind of judgement for not covering her head.

Mani

Mani is a sociable and outgoing person, quite well-known for the work he does in his community in Egypt. He is missing his support network from back home, although he struggles to ask them for support or advice as he was a well-respected member of the community before he moved to Hilltown. To show a need for support feels like a weakness to him, which seems to further entrench the difficulties he has so far encountered such as the struggle to find suitable accommodation. Mani has met other co-nationals at university, mainly from the Egyptian student society. He comes from a country where religion is a big part of the culture and he enjoys sharing religious feasts. He also thinks it is important to have friends with similar sense of humour who he can be himself around. Mani is the only participant living with his spouse who is on a dependant's visa. Mani's main concern is getting his wife to have 'an enjoyable life' in the UK, and he is disappointed that his efforts have thus far been unsuccessful. Like others, Mani generally follows the word-of-mouth advice from friends when it comes to choosing where to go or what to do in and around Hilltown. Mani mentions the British stereotypes that he had heard or seen on television before he arrived and was surprised at the difference between what he expected and what he found, as recounted through his experience of a very rowdy New Year's Eve in central London. He also mentions the feeling of perceived prejudice when he tells people he is from Egypt, although he does not seem troubled by this. His efforts to move to accommodation out of student halls of residence and in the community are perhaps a sign that he feels safe in the UK. At the time of the interviews, Egypt was enduring difficult political circumstances and Mani feels unsure of his options following his PhD.

Mazee

Mazee began her studies at Master's level. She went to a boarding school in Nigeria which may explain why she enjoys spending time alone. As such, she does not like crowds or parties although she does occasionally socialise with her Nigerian friends in pubs and clubs out of curiosity about life in Britain. Mazee has the firm intention of returning to her home country after her PhD and thus does not show much intention of creating her own opportunities for integration. Having said that, Mazee has had a couple of jobs in the UK, for the experience rather than for the money and through which she recounts episodes of perceived racism, yet like other participants she shows resilience towards it. Mazee has a fairly large network of Nigerian friends and a Nigerian boyfriend who she met whilst studying at Hilltown. She thinks it is useful to make Nigerian friends at first, but then once they help her through the adjustment phase, she no longer feels it necessary to keep in touch with most of her co-national contacts. Indeed, Mazee offers some criticism of her co-nationals after having had negative experiences of living with other Nigerians. She has met some other international student research colleagues and socialises with them sometimes. Mazee is very preoccupied by her PhD and is the only participant to admit staying at home all weekend thinking about her disappointing lab results, waiting for Monday to come so she can return to the same problem. She has however bonded with others over shared difficulties and has made some effort to *break things up a bit* by going bowling with her PhD colleagues to try and release some stress. She seems to miss the simple on-tap entertainment of her family life in Nigeria and, like others, observes the lack of things to do in Hilltown in the evening. She is however very happy with the systems and structures in place in Britain, such as transport, banks and shops.

Zinnia

Zinnia has a strong network of co-national contacts. She is a member of the Burmese student society and helps to organise events with others in that society. She enjoys doing

this and is keen to help build bridges for future international students from Myanmar.

Zinnia is also interested in meeting British students, but has often stumbled upon cultural differences which she perceives as barriers to the formation of strong relationships. As well as this, she describes a perceived two-tier hierarchy with British PhD students at the top and international students like herself underneath. Zinnia has made a lot of effort to understand and take part in British life outside of the university context. She enjoys going to the same café every week for a *British breakfast* where they remember her regular order and this makes her feel welcome. Zinnia is not interested in nightclubs or popular culture, but does enjoy meeting people on trips and organised events, which is perhaps why she has also chosen to go on a few coach holidays with a British tour company.

Through experiencing Britain through the stance of a tourist during these trips, she has got to know some interesting parts of Britain and has also learnt about aspects of daily British life such as the social protocols of eating in restaurants. Thanks also to the British Chinese Cultural Exchange social group, Zinnia has come to learn a lot about Britain. Food is mentioned often by Zinnia and much of her socialising revolves around food, such as going to food parties at international student friends' houses and visiting cafés and restaurants recommended by her co-national friends.

Leo

Leo does not have a very large social network, perhaps because he has not placed his temporary friendships on the network map and is really looking for more meaningful friendships. It is not enough to just meet other British people, they need to have shared interests. He is very focussed on his research so naturally wants to be able to talk about it with his friends, yet at the same time Leo describes his research as being quite isolating because he is the only researcher in his field. Leo does have some close Chinese friends who are studying at other universities in Britain, who he meets up with occasionally when he has a break from his PhD. He also plays badminton and occasionally attends the British

Chinese Cultural Exchange group meet-ups. Leo is quietly reflective of his experience in Britain. He is surprised by the amount of overt religion he has seen because he learnt about life in the UK mostly from the television. He also compares people in Britain to people in China and observes some fundamental social differences, such as the way in which people treat others outside of their social circle. Leo is the only participants to point out difficulties understanding the local accent in Hilltown, which may have an effect on his integration if he struggles to communicate with local people. Leo states that he does not feel a real sense of belonging anywhere, not even in his home country, although he is content with this because he enjoys change. Like Robbie, Leo finds out local information via Sina Weibo, a Chinese website where previous Chinese international students share their experiences.

Logan

Logan enjoys solitude and therefore he does not have a large social group, which is his choice. Logan's closest friends also live in different countries around the world. Logan is the only participant who has no social contacts in the inner 'important' circle, although he does not explain why this is. He does not seem particularly disturbed by it and seems rather matter-of-fact about the desire to make more friends. He does not feel the need to make many strategic social contacts whilst he is in the UK, although he thinks he could learn about British culture from local people. Logan raises the issue of diversity in Britain, calling it a *weird mix of so many things* but he says this in a positive light as he feels comfortable living in a diverse community. Logan is very logical and practical. He struggles to understand the feedback from his supervisor as it is partly critical yet framed in a positive way. Logan enjoys going to the theatre and to art galleries, and has been to a few in nearby cities, although he has never visited the local ones in Hilltown as he has not been given information about them. Logan also does some volunteering at a local cancer charity because he wishes to give something back to society.

APPENDIX 6: Abdo's sketch of word-of-mouth information

